

APRIL

VOL. 24 NO. 4

1908

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THE SMART SET

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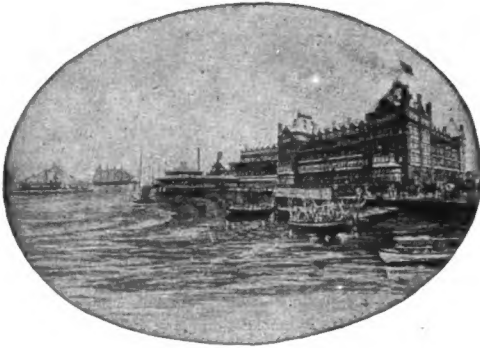
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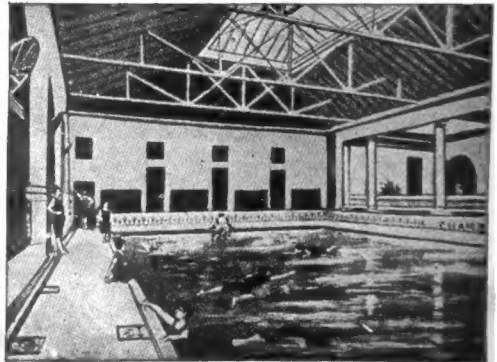
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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXIV

APRIL, 1908

No. 4

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$2.50

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Entered at New York Post-Office as second-class mail matter

Issued monthly by Ess Ess Publishing Company, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York

It is requested that all MSS. be addressed to The Editor

WILLIAM D. MANN, President

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THE WHITE STAIN

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

I

HE came out of the house moodily, his long climber's staff under his arm the better to use both hands in lighting his briar pipe, his hat pulled far down over his eyes, and his whole being conscious of a disgusting lack of something in the natural scheme of things.

It was a very pretty little house, as white as newly washed and starched linen. There were many small red poppies flickering against the base of the wall, and at one side on the grass, under a vine trained over a rude pergola of wooden supports, there were two chairs and a little table on which still remained the evidences that two persons had had a most satisfactory *déjeuner*. And yet in spite of the fact that he was one of the two the brows under the brim of the soft felt hat were frowning not altogether because a man always frowns when he lights a pipe—though heaven only knows why he should.

The frown remained after the match had been blown out and thrown away, and he stood there switching his long stock impatiently. Not even the view before him of the beautiful Val Torenche, with the charming little town of Châtillon as prettily spread between the peaks on either side as if it were a dainty child's toy arranged in the grass for the delight of some lucky youngster, with the blue sky flecked with duplicating cumulus cloud puffs, and with the ineffable perfection of Summer spread about like fascination overlaid upon a woman's beauty, could dispel the frown. He took two or three puffs

at the pipe, a totally unnecessary pull at the lowering cap, and started forward as moodily as ever.

Another man had come to the door of the house behind him, a man of his own age and perhaps a bit more. Perhaps a bit more he was in everything—except the frown—a bit more tall, a bit more blond, a bit more square in the shoulder, a bit better to look at and a good many bits more cheerful. He, too, was smoking, in a fine, comfortable manner, filling his big lungs wickedly in the face of the splendid mountain air. He had watched his friend begin his promenade, and he knew the frown was there, although he was on the wrong side to see it.

"I must say, Blaisdell, you are devilish hard to please!" His voice was not clear, but had a remarkably agreeable intonation. That he was an Englishman was just as evident as that the other man was not.

Blaisdell, who had gone but a step or two from him, paused at the sound of the voice and turned about.

"I mean," he added, waving his own pipe at the splendor of the scene facing them, "if you cannot enjoy that, and let your own little ambitions sink into insignificance beside it."

"Humph!" said Blaisdell, turning a dull eye on the prospect.

"Come now," said the other, "it's beautiful beyond all words—much better than anything you'll ever paint, you know. Why not be happy in the possession of it—for you do possess it, in possessing this little spot from which to see it."

"I don't want to possess things," said Blaisdell. "I want to make them."

"You have the soul of a baker," said his friend, smiling comfortably and straddling the doorway. "You want to make things, do you? What's the matter with mud cookies, for example? There's lots of material yonder in Zerbion for that."

"You're a pleasant idiot to have invited down here for a visit!" said Blaisdell. "On my honor, Ritchie, if you are going to find fault with me now for having ambitions, when ever since I have known you you have quarreled with me because I hadn't, I shall set you down as a deucedly undesirable guest and look up convenient trains for your departure."

The man in the doorway was in no wise disconcerted by this threat, which indeed was delivered with more of a smile than had been visible beneath the frown these many hours. He put both hands in his pockets—he was so wide and the doorway was so narrow that in order to do it he had to keep his elbows well inside the house—and puffed again.

"Very well, my child. Run along. You are obscuring my view of this lovely place that I am visiting on such precarious title to the right. May you lose your hump somewhere between here and here. I don't want to see it coming back with you. If worst comes to the worst—which may in itself be a retaliatory reference to my visit here—I will paint you a picture of Joan of Arc myself, and you can sign it. It will do far better at the Salon if we arrange it that way. Anyhow, I can't for the life of me see why you want to bother with such an old walnut."

"Chestnut is the word," said Blaisdell. "At least I suppose that is what you wanted to say. The way you English people take up the very commonest American slang and shun the really clever stuff, amazes me."

"I am very sorry," said Ritchie, so penitently that Blaisdell had to grin again.

"As for Joan of Arc being a chestnut, you might as well apply the term to any of the hundreds of paintings of the Mother and Child. Besides, I tell you, I

want to do it. I've been reading and reading and reading about her till it has got to tingling in the tips of my fingers. I almost know just how I want to do it—but she's such a miracle—and you know I need——"

"Oh, Lord, yes!" said Ritchie with mock fatigue. "I should say I do know. Who better? Haven't I been here three days! I tell you, Blaisdell, you will never appreciate what I have suffered in the cause of friendship since I innocently walked into this trap. Let me arrange this thing. Go for your prowl and come back with a nice, clean, smiling face, and tomorrow we will shut up the place and you can go back to Paris, and Bobo can come and pose in a full suit of tin armor——"

"Bobo!" groaned Blaisdell. "You are unendurable."

"Bobo is very pretty," said Ritchie reflectively. "But then, as you say, she has not the face of a miracle."

"I said nothing of the sort."

"But of course she hasn't, and by the way, just what would be a miracle to your way of thinking?"

Blaisdell cut a swing with his staff. "A beautiful woman who was innocent," he said at last.

Ritchie considered him from the doorway. "Is that your own?"

"I don't suppose it is," rejoined the other, his mood descending heavily upon him. "I dare say I have never had and never will have an original idea in all my life."

"It was your own idea to go for a walk," said Ritchie.

"Well, and I am going!" retorted Blaisdell, and he turned and went.

In the heart of the valley of Aosta lay the little valley of Tornenche, and so beautiful was it that this was not in the least to be wondered at. It lay also in the heart of Hunter Blaisdell, or at least it had until in the mood that now possessed him he had turned the heart inside out, emptied it until it held no more than a shipwrecked sailor's tobacco-pouch, and put it back in his breast empty. He seemed none the better for this radical operation, for if before he had been unable to work and

had taken it with a restless melancholy, he was now just as unable to get ahead with the plans for his picture, and was moreover in an irritable state of mind that quite justified Ritchie's statement of having been tricked into making a visit at a time when there was not fit entertainment for man or beast.

Blaisdell had come down through the Aosta with a view to going south to Venice and perhaps to Rome and Naples, but the beauty of Châtillon had satisfied him. He had wanted to get away from the atmosphere of his daily life, to get out of touch with the minds that inevitably influenced him, and to dream alone in some fruitful spot until the inspiration of the picture would surely come to him.

He had not intended to stay in Châtillon even after he had fallen in love with it—there were too many people, too many houses, too much of everything. But in wandering about—he was a mighty wanderer—he had passed the little white house with the flickering poppies and the rude little pergola. And he said to himself, said he, "Why not?"

The immediate reason of this remark had been the display on the white wall of the garden of a clumsily drawn bilingual sign, "*Si Loca à louer.*" So Blaisdell had looked at the outside of the little house and said, "Why not?" And he had looked at the inside of the little house and said, "Why not?" with the result that the decent folk living within had moved their more personal possessions into the rear parts of the house and had consented to cook and clean and in all ways assist in the satisfactory demonstration of the fact that there was no reason why not.

He had been quite content there for a time, doing absolutely nothing but sleep and eat, and in the intervals bask in a secure notion that the inspiration would come. He had felt with the rhymester that he wanted

" . . . to find a warm beech wood,
And lie down and keep still;
And swear a little; and feel good;
Then loaf on up the hill."

And he had done it to his own taste, which was very much better in such matters than any queen's could ever have been, until one day in a box of books, that had been sent down for him from Paris anent rainy evenings when he was thrown upon his own society because he could not have the stars', he came upon a volume of the life of Joan of Arc, and a phrase of it having caught his eye he sat down to read it to the literally bitter end.

The power and the glory of the child, who in an age where women were considered as chattels only a bit above the beasts of the field, and that only because they could reproduce men, had gained consent to lead an army for a king, and had led it on to victories miraculous to relate, thrilled him as if for the first time in his life he had read the tale. And then began all the trouble.

He wanted to paint this Maid of Orleans. Visions of chaotic canvases gamboled about his bed by night and got between him and his interest in omelettes by day. Old hackneyed notions of her astride a horse in her man's armor, or transfigured in the fields by the voices of her angels, came to him with all the glamour of newness, and had to be shaken off at some pains. He made continual thumbnail sketches of suggestions—Joan at Domrémy, at Chinon, at Orléans, at Rheims, at Paris, at Compiègne, at Beaufort, and at Rouen, but nothing suited him and no inspiration came.

This was the trouble. This was the reason for his frowning impatience, and for Ritchie's most pardonable assertion that he was not fit to be the host of an independent dog.

As he struck off through the little wavering path away from Châtillon, his mind went back to its problem, and his eyes seldom lifted above the ground beneath his feet. For all he knew the deep, fair valley in which he walked might have been the flat, arid plain of Texas. He went on in his absorption farther than he had intended, a turn in the valley hiding Châtillon from where he stood at last, lost as it were in the

midst of countless landmarks. If he saw that the place was beautiful, in a glorious haze of placidity, it was by the mechanical working of a trained and appreciative eye. To his inner man, as he stood looking about, it was nothing but part of a tiresome world lacking inspiration, and yet for all that perhaps not wanting in a near-by house where he might quench his thirst.

Now if he had been a man who believed in fairies—there was nothing much he did believe in, according to the amiable habit of painters, except his own understanding of art—he might have accredited the Little People with the management of the whole affair. As it was, he contended afterward to Ritchie that it was the merest chance, and Ritchie replied somewhat sententiously that it made no difference what one called it, the man who believed in chance was just as much a slave as the man who believed in Kismet. But Blaisdell wasn't listening and merely mumbled his polite, "I dare say," with lips that held a painting brush, because when the mood of gloom was lifted from him he wasn't at all a badly mannered fellow.

But whoever was to blame for it, Blaisdell came to a stand within ten yards of a little hut, and the two people with their backs toward him who stood before it proceeded unconsciously to give him what he had been seeking.

The two people were a priest and a girl of barely sixteen. They had evidently just come out of the cabin, for the priest was turning to go, and his last words were apparently not of the jocund order that a student of comic opera would expect to hear. Blaisdell couldn't hear them—didn't want to hear them. But they were evidently a short summing-up of a scolding, a sort of "remember-what-I-said-to-you" epitome of what had gone before, though the girl was so humbly frightened already that this last snap of the knout seemed quite superfluous.

It was the girl, of course, that Blaisdell was watching—not because she was one of the radiant beauties young men are accredited in fiction

with meeting whenever there is a solitary walk in the plot, for she was a homely little thing—but because there was an expression in her face, which was partly turned from him, that stirred something in his heart as charming as a sleeping kitten. It was a fluttering, ticklish, delightful sensation. And Blaisdell had got his idea.

The priest was turning away. The slip of a girl dropped on her knee—he did not even know it—and her face was lifted with a look of suffering, of purity, of innocence, and yet without reproach. Then she lifted the dangling end of his dirty rope girdle and kissed it. The passion of her faith was in her face as she did it.

In an instant it was over. The girl went back into the cabin, the priest went on his self-righteous way. And Blaisdell stood in the road with the frown lifted from his face.

He remained there a moment, staring. Under the dingy skirts of the priest's robe, which hung so much farther from the ground in front than in back for reasons not unconnected with his mode of living, the soft dust of the road rose in a little puff of smoke, as humble an incense as the peasant girl's simplicity. The figure plodded on, lost a moment later by a dip in the road.

With the disappearance of the latter of the *dramatis personæ* Blaisdell came to himself. Then he turned with a new lightness in his step not usually acquired by the pedestrian after a four-mile tramp, and set himself to the right-about to retrace his steps. He had a buoyant desire to tell Ritchie—to talk about it. He had not kept silent about his trouble and it was not likely that he would maintain a secrecy concerning his delight. But whether Ritchie would be as afflicted under the repetition of the one as he had been with the other, who could say?

Blaisdell, however, had not gone a hundred yards when he stopped stark still in the middle of the road. His eyes sought the far-off peak of Tzan, and he demurred there for several

instants as still as a gate-post. Then, with a sharp, indrawn word, he turned about on his heel and went back toward the cabin. It was the smallest, poorest, most uninviting place he had ever approached, but none of such an appreciation showed in his face. On the contrary, his eyes were bright and his look alert, and the rap he bestowed upon the door had as much sparkle in it as a rap could have.

The door was opened by a middle-aged woman.

She was not a particularly attractive woman to look at. She was of good material, but battered out of all symmetry, as a fine pewter jug might be that had been sent too often on domestic errands. Her body was broad and flat, her face was broad and flat, her hands were broad and flat. And for all the intelligence that shone in her face, her understanding might have been flat enough to match them, but never broad under any circumstances. Blaisdell, however, was not as blind as a man who cannot see. He felt instinctively that there was more in the woman than met the casual observer.

Blaisdell pulled off his felt hat and bowed. The woman executed an awkward movement that might have passed for an abortive curtsy.

"*Buon giorno*," said Blaisdell.

"*Buon giorno*," she said, and waited for more. The woman said it better than he, but it was noticeably the mother-tongue of neither.

"Are you French?" he asked in French, which he spoke vastly better.

"Yes," said the woman. She remained at the door, quiet, immovable, dignified, the while she wiped her rough hands upon her apron.

"I have come on an errand that may seem strange to you," said he, always in her native language. "May I talk with you about it? My name is Blaisdell—I am an American, an artist."

Whether her faith pinned itself to his nationality or his calling he could not say. She stood aside politely enough and asked him to come in. He

stepped past her, inclining his head. He saw that there was no one in the room except themselves, and of this he was very glad.

The woman closed the door and turned to face him. "My name is Cabert," she said, with natural tact. She offered him a chair.

The place was neat enough and clean enough, but very bare. He had expected no more. There were gardening implements near another door, and the woman's hands were earth-stained. But she stood quietly, with no attempt to conceal them or better them.

"You come on an errand?" she said at last.

"For myself," said Blaisdell. "I was passing here a little while ago and I saw a young girl talking to a priest in the road."

The woman's eyes narrowed and became more searching. She looked rapidly over his face and his dress and back to his face again.

"I am a painter," said he, quietly giving her time to complete her scrutiny. "For several weeks I have been worrying over my picture that is to go to the Salon, and have been unable to fix it. Today a little gesture of your daughter's—she is your daughter?"

The woman bent her head gravely.

"A little gesture of your daughter's," resumed Blaisdell, "suggested to me just what I wanted." The release from his days of moodiness rang involuntarily in his voice. "I turned about to go home when it occurred to me that she was eminently the type I wanted to portray in my picture, and the idea occurred to me that you might—or whoever her guardians might be, which I didn't then know, of course—let her pose for the thing."

He paused, for on looking up again he found that the woman's eyes were wide and angry. Instinctively he got to his feet.

"I have annoyed you," he said. "I beg your pardon." But there was a question in his face. They stood a moment facing each other. And then, because he was by no means a stupid young man, an idea occurred to him.

"The picture," he said, "is of La Pucelle. I thought perhaps she could rig up some sort of plain heavy white gown, you know—it could be cut out of sheeting so far as that is concerned. I thought perhaps she could let me have a couple of hours a day—I could come here and set up my easel in your yard."

The fire had died out of the woman's eyes. Blaisdell saw it and saw in it the vindication of his tactics. The woman had not been sure what he meant by "pose for the thing." Sometimes the best of men are tactless.

"La Pucelle," said the woman. "You think she looks like La Pucelle?" It was the involuntary question of a mother. "In a heavy white gown—perhaps she could do it." The last sentence came very slowly, word by word. She eyed the man intently.

Blaisdell sat down again, turning his hat around in his hands.

"Of course I could come here," he said with deliberate emphasis, "but I would far rather she came to me. I live some distance away, nearer to Châtillon, and all my paints and things are there. But she need not come alone, of course. I could give her five francs for the two hours."

"Five francs!" said the woman. Her eyes traveled about the bare room, and rested on the gardening tools. It took a long time to earn five francs with those, and there were many things they needed. She looked again at him uncertainly. And then unexpectedly she sat down on the other chair—there were only two in the room—and leaned her arms on the table.

"Where do you live?" she said.

"In a little house that I have rented of Vittorio Pasquale."

She nodded. "I know the place," she said. "Who lives with you?"

"Vittorio and his wife do the work. I have a friend, an Englishman, visiting me now."

She drew breath and looked long at him. Then she glanced at the closed door at the end of the room toward which he had turned his back. And being, as has been said, by no means a

stupid young man, he gathered that there was someone in that room whom she did not wish to have hear their conversation, and he guessed it was the child herself. He was strengthened in this belief by what the woman said. Her plain, broad, flat face was intense, almost eager, as she leaned nearer him and somewhat lowered her voice.

"Listen," she said. "My husband is dead; his father and grandfather lived here, like many other French soldiers' families since the days when Bonaparte made the place his own. The child was born here. I have kept her always at my side. She has grown up as the flowers grow. She has never heard of evil. She knows a few simple truths about life, about right and wrong, but she is quite ignorant of the sins of men and women. I have done this because it is our way with young women, though the most of us, during our convent days, hear and learn more of the wickedness of the world than any gamins on the sidewalks. She has not. I do not want her to. Some day when she is old enough—she is not quite sixteen—I will look up a marriage for her, and then she will have someone to go on protecting her after I am dead. Do you see? But she has never been out of my sight and she knows nothing but what I have told her. If I let her go to you—not alone, of course, for I shall go with her always—can you promise me she will not even overhear things that might open her eyes to the shameful possibilities of life, the things of which she knows nothing?"

Blaisdell listened to her, with steady eyes bent upon her.

"But certainly!" he said. "There will be no one there but ourselves. Vittorio and his wife are decent folk, and out of hearing, at that. As for my friend and myself, we are gentlemen."

She continued to look at him fixedly for a few moments. Then she relaxed her intent attitude and leaned back in her chair. "Very well," she said. "We will come. When do you want her?"

Blaisdell smiled. "Well, tomorrow

is about the first day I could be sure of," he said pleasantly.

She smiled, too. It was the ratification of the treaty.

II

RITCHIE lay on his back in the grass and was grateful for the shade of the tree hanging above him. As usual, he was smoking, and with his hands clasped behind his head and one foot crossed over the other, he looked like a man who, even if he were not "dreaming true," was at least amply comfortable. He was too comfortable so much as to turn his head when Blaisdell came out from the rear of the house, struggling with a large packing-box. He cocked one eye at him and observed the unequal contest with languid interest.

"Allow me to do that for you," he said politely. The effect of the offer was rather marred by the fact that he lay as placidly motionless in the grass as ever.

"Thanks awfully," retorted Blaisdell. "You see, I take so much more pride in the thing if I have done it all myself."

"Very laudable," murmured the recumbent one, and shut his eyes.

Blaisdell dragged and pulled and pushed the heavy thing into the position he had determined for it. Then he took out a large handkerchief and mopped his head and hands. Ritchie deigned to show his interest anew. "Hot work, isn't it?" he said.

"I'm sorry you find it so," replied his host.

Ritchie laughed. "And may I ask what this coffin for six is destined to accomplish?" he inquired.

"It's a model throne," said Blaisdell indignantly. "I should think you would know that when you look at it."

"Ah—so it is. Why, certainly—so it is," affably assented Ritchie. He sat up then and took both knees into his embrace. "La Pucelle, then, is really coming today?"

"Good heavens," said Blaisdell,

"you don't think there's any chance that she will disappoint me?"

"None whatever. You're as bad as a man in love. Come?—for five francs? Why, you chump—is that the right word?—she would have come for two. You need a secretary and treasurer."

"It's what I pay my models always," Blaisdell replied, squinting abominably at the light. "Besides, I was so afraid her mother would say no—I wanted to be positively irresistible."

"Is she, then, so pretty, this girl?"

"Not at all. But I am going to make her beautiful."

"On canvas?"

"Every way." He did not wait for a reply to this arrogance, but returned into the house and presently came out with his easel under one arm and a great flat tin box under the other. He was whistling.

"At any rate, it has exorcised your evil spirit," said Ritchie, who had lain down again.

"Then I take it you have done me the honor to decide to remain with me a while?"

"I will stay a month longer if this good behavior keeps up," said his guest magnanimously. "When I feel quite rested——"

Blaisdell snorted. Ritchie turned a severe eye upon him. "When I feel quite rested," he repeated in a slightly louder tone, "I shall do a little painting myself."

"Oh, I wouldn't bother," said the host soothingly. "It is really not worth while."

Then they both laughed and Ritchie knocked the ash out of his pipe. "When is the girl coming?"

"Presently. She is due in half an hour. You see"—he left the sentence suspended while he went indoors and got his block—"you see, I am going to make a lot of studies first. I am going into the thing seriously. It's going to be a big picture."

"How big?" asked Ritchie guilelessly.

"Now, don't you be an ass," replied Blaisdell. He had his campstool out, and was establishing himself, looking

out good bits of charcoal. "I'll say that I hope it is going to be a big picture. By jingo, it ought to be if I can get on canvas the look she had on her face yesterday. Why," he turned about, facing his friend, "that pudgy old priest commits more sins in an hour than she will in her whole lifetime. I suppose she had been away from some service or something and he was telling her that they put an extra scorch into hell-fire for girls like her. But it did the trick for me all right."

"Did the trick for me all right," repeated Ritchie. "What brand of slang is that? May I or may I not use it?"

Blaisdell was not paying attention. "I saw the whole thing in an instant—the crowd of wretches, evil-faced and evil-hearted, surging around the little creature, the way forward to the stake being the only space left open and that with a cruel willingness. I shall have the torches already lighted just to throw an extra touch of the devils into it. There she goes, and just near stands a soldier with the banner of France—don't you see? The lilies she had saved from ruin, the flag she has carried into battle at the head of her armies. She catches the edge of it, as she goes by, to lift it to her lips. There is not a trace of reproach in her face for the mob and her executioners, but there is the fear of the coming torture. And yet above all her passionate love for the bonny flag that flies because of her, and a very human pang that because of her devotion to it, she must die. One man from the crowd has stretched out his arm to snatch it away from her lips, but he in turn is caught in the grip of an old soldier, who with the tears streaming down his face is watching the bravest soul he ever knew go forward to a far more terrible death than any soldier ever had to face."

Ritchie was not mocking now. "It is good, Blaisdell," he said. He got to his feet, and while he filled his pipe again he shook his great shoulders back and nodded several times. "It is very good. If you can put the feeling

into it that you put into me by talking about it, it will be big—as big as all outdoors." He watched the younger man a moment in silence. And his manner became slowly uncomfortable, as is the way with a certain type of man when he finds himself impelled to speak of things serious. "I say—" he began, straddling his feet apart. And again, "I say—"

"But you don't, you see!" returned his host, smiling and glancing up momentarily from his occupation.

"Well, this sort of thing, you know, Blaisdell," blurted out Ritchie, forgetting in his interest in the subject to light the pipe he had so carefully prepared. "This wandering about, accomplishing nothing and being nobody. When are you going to outgrow it?"

"God knows," said Blaisdell peacefully.

"But, but really, you know!" protested the other.

"Do I?"

"Well, probably you don't!" said Ritchie. "But it is quite wrong, and altogether bally stupid on your part. You are not a baby in a pushcart, my dear fellow. Now, I can't paint. I have a try at it and I can get off something with a wet meadow and a dry brook that old ladies can contemplate without tears. But you can paint, confound you handsomely for being able to do it! And you fry away your time, and live in no place and know no one. You ought to establish yourself, get a solid footing under you, get your name printed about, fish up some initials to put after it, and—and start in, don't you know!"

Blaisdell pushed back his cap and scratched his crown. "You are the most abject failure as a cheerful, agreeable guest that I have ever known," he said.

"Piffle!" said Ritchie. "What do you want to do—go galloping on in this edgeless pseudo-bohemian paddock, getting nowhere? Do you want to live in two rooms in Paris always, with an occasional vagabondage into the Aosta, and grow into an undignified, smutty,

crumby, grubby old age like—like Fournière, for example?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Blaisdell fervently.

"Then what do you want?"

"At the moment," said the victim amiably, "I want Miss Cabert."

Ritchie, in high disgust, struck a match and lighted his pipe. But he was not to be silenced either by that means or by his friend's indifference. With the first blow of smoke his voice came forth. "You are not building up any future for yourself. You are not getting anywhere. You dabble at this canvas and you dabble at that. You give up your hours to people who are not worthy of one minute of consideration, and the hours add themselves into days, weeks, months—and where are you?"

"I am in the front pew, fast asleep," said Blaisdell.

"The Lord knows it is nothing to me, except that you are a friend. But I cannot bear to see you go on forever, spending the substance of thirty on the amusements of eighteen."

"And fourthly?"

"Fourthly, you're a blasted rogue."

"And to sum up?"

"To sum up, I'll begin again tomorrow!"

Blaisdell groaned. "Every day will be Sunday by-and-bye," he said dejectedly.

"What you need—" began Ritchie, feet farther apart than ever and a magic swirl of smoke about his head.

"I know!" interrupted the other. "All the doctors have told me: Rest and quiet, and some non-argumentative friend to stay with me and encourage me." He drooped into an attitude of utter dejection.

Ritchie laughed. "You are an ass, of course. And by the same token you do need a fire built under you to make you go. But I advise—no, I'll predict!"

"There goes your last shred of honor," said Blaisdell, cheering up.

"Ah, but this is not 'my ain coun-tree,'" retorted the other. "I'll lay you a wager then."

Blaisdell put a reluctant hand into his breeches pocket and produced a lira. "That's enough," he said. "I can't bear to take money from a half-witted chap."

"In three years," said Ritchie sentimentously, "you will either have lost any chance you might have had to spur yourself onward to achievement, or you will have adopted my suggestion and made yourself solid."

"Solid?" said Blaisdell.

"You will probably marry a British matron with arms like a beef-à-la-mode, settle in London, and paint wealthy portraits of people who were rich until they met you."

"I couldn't," said Blaisdell. "It would be too hard work."

"Hard?" cried Ritchie.

"As hard as eating crowdie without a bicker. 'Which language,'" he added, rising and cocking a solemn eye at his friend, "'they not seeming to understand, it was observed to have great weight with them.'" He wandered down to the road and stood there looking into vacancy.

That this vacancy became annihilated a few moments later was evidenced by his turning about and starting pell-mell for the house.

"She's coming," he said. "I'll get the gown for her, and the sirup for her mother. Greet them when they arrive."

Ritchie obediently put the pipe into his pocket, hot as it was, and stationed himself at the gate. In a moment more the two peasant women stood before him. He took a quick survey of them, not noticing their plain, homely clothes, but merely the faces and the attitudes and the look of the eyes. The older woman, broad and flat and shapeless, was as ever keenly on the alert for what should be warded from her daughter's ken. He saw her sharp eyes returning his scrutiny and softening a little as they recognized his gentle breeding. But of course it was the girl who interested him more. Yes, she was ugly, as Blaisdell had said, but he could see also how she had inspired the picture he craved to paint.

She was frail—Ritchie to himself called her divinely thin—and her face was rather sharply pointed, though her chin did not lack strength. Her eyes loomed large in her face, shadowed about by dusks that seemed to cling to the lids and below, now to be gone, now to be there. Her nose was nondescript, rather broad than beautiful, and her mouth was gravely dubious. The strong yellow hair that grew so luxuriantly upon her forehead was drawn back tight and smooth, and braided into a semblance of a torturer's knout behind. The curious frock she wore was of ungainly cut, showing too much of an immature ankle and a thin wrist and calculated to impress the casual observer with the idea that the human form was a sad affair at best, and the less it was considered the better. The important thing in the face was its look of latent courage, of strength that would be ready when it was needed and of unimaginative ignorance and purity.

Ritchie stood aside and pulled his cap out of his pocket, as if in so doing he somehow executed an obeisance. "Be good enough to come in," he said politely. "Mr. Blaisdell will be here at once." His French was of a stalwart English kind that any true son of Britannia would have sworn was as much better than the original as roast-beef than vol-au-vent puff paste.

The mother thanked him, and they all stood in the yard, waiting for Blaisdell. The girl looked at him steadfastly, with the open-eyed frankness of a little child, which was not without its embarrassment. But Blaisdell put an end to the difficult situation by appearing at the door of the house. He had a gown over his arm, a long, semi-medieval rag he had ferreted out of a trunk of artistic properties that he carried about with the rest of his extravagantly extensive luggage. He was looking so thoroughly happy and delighted that the whole affair was immediately transformed from its awkwardness into one of good-natured pleasure.

"Good day, good day," he said,

flourishing the gown. "If you will bring your daughter in here, Madame Cabert, she can put on the dress. It is not exactly what I want, but it will serve."

The women went toward him, smiling. Ritchie heard an unintelligible murmur of suggestion, as the mother took the gown from him, looking it over with some curiosity. Then, followed by her daughter, she entered the house and Blaisdell bore down upon his friend.

"What do you think of her?" he asked.

"I think she is remarkable," said Ritchie flatly. "She shows neither pleasure nor embarrassment; she is neither flattered nor oppressed by your desire to portray her features in an immortal canvas. But she is a homely little thing."

He was surprised to have Blaisdell laugh at him. "Wait and see," he said.

"I will, if you permit me. Though I had rather an idea of taking myself off and leaving you alone with the inspiration."

"No need to do that," said Blaisdell, "for I shall not know you are here once I get started. There is one thing, however! I have received my instructions and I pass them on to you. This is a *jeune fille* of *jeunes filles*. Not a word that would bring a blush to the cheek of a woman with a past."

"I hear and I obey," said Ritchie solemnly. "If you find me wandering off into the forbidden regions of our usual wickedness, with a suggestion that the sky is blue, or that bread-and-butter is nice with afternoon tea, pray check me!"

"Good heavens, yes. That reminds me of the sirup for her mother. Old fellow, would you have the goodness to prow around to the back of the house and tell Lucia or Vittorio to bring forth the sweet water and the cakes?"

"I fly," replied the other, with a yawn, as he moved slowly away.

He was amazed on his return, bearing the promise of the soon-to-be-served refreshment, to find that Blaisdell had indeed made her beautiful. The gown

was straightly cut, and of a somber blue, with some gold and fur about the pointed neck which became her girlish slenderness. But it was not the dress that had so transfigured her, though it did much in being long where her own frock had been short and in giving her a certain grace that with all her repose and simplicity she had not had. It was her hair that made the difference. Blaisdell had unbraided it, and with all the cunning of an artist's fingers shaken it into loose, rippling masses about her face. Relieved of the long strain of bondage, little short locks curled into ringlets about her forehead and cheeks, softening the crude outline and shadowing her eyes with mystery. She was sitting on the chair of the model throne, gazing before her with a serene thoughtfulness, and Blaisdell at his drawing was working like a man possessed of an angel. Madame Cabert was knitting, sitting placidly near her daughter and keeping up the charming silence. Ritchie, smoking as ever, drew a book from his pocket and lay down in the grass gingerly, as if he feared the sod might creak beneath his weight and so disturb them.

The book was a slim little affair in dull brown—"Verses, by Julian Ritchie." It had come by post the day before, and this elder brother of the young poet had been as proud of it as if it had been his own. There was a quaint, affectionate line or two in the boy's beautiful handwriting on the fly-leaf, and Ritchie had been pleased as much by the message as by the really creditable verses within. This brother of his was dear to him, far more dear than his Britishness would admit aloud. And he was proud of the young beggar, so he was. He took him about London with a general air of "Stop and look at him," and he watched by-passers admire the fellow's healthy good looks with a deep and abiding gratification.

He had read the verses through—there were not so many of them that a man could not read them all in an evening. But there were a couple or

more that he wanted to look at again in the cold light of day. He read them over now, and let them ring in his head as he lay in the grass with his eyes closed. He wished that Julian were there with them; how he would have enjoyed the day, how he would have expanded in its silences and become eloquent in its times of words!

Madame Cabert, always knitting, turned a glance at him and smiled because of his pleasant laziness. "You were reading, monsieur?" she asked softly. It was the only time they spoke during those morning hours.

"Yes, madame. Some verses by my brother."

"So? You have a brother who is a poet? They are English verses, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"As good as Monsieur Keats?"

"Well, hardly! You have read Keats, then?" He took a new look at her broad, flat person. "In English?"

"Yes, I read English. Léonie understands it, too. But we are not sure enough to speak it." Her voice, which had hardly been raised above a whisper, now trailed away into silence. She nodded and smiled and bent her head again over her knitting.

The little interlude had not dispelled the illusion of profound silence, and by-and-bye when Lucia came out from the little house bearing a tray of flagons of sweetness, the interchange of soft greetings between herself and Madame Cabert no more intruded upon the peaceful warm serenity of the hour than the comfortable churr of the insects or the subdued twitterings of the birds.

Lazy giant as he was, Ritchie was disposed to look upon this perfection of solitude and companionship with an apprehensive eye. It was too good to last, this sort of thing, he told himself. It might do very well for a day, and the first day at that, when for all her amazing poise the youngster must feel strange with them, but in another twenty-four hours they would have her chattering banalities and making

life wearisome. He looked at her now and again over the top of his book. She was not in the least homely. He wondered whimsically how Du Barry herself would have looked in a shapeless, ugly gown, and with her hair dragged straightly back. Why didn't women always wear their hair about their shoulders? It would perhaps make a difference in their whole lives. To begin with, it would revolutionize dress. No one could let down a mass of girlish Grecian hair over a gown of pailletted velvet by Paquin. How stuffy and ugly the dress would look, how tight in the waist, how monstrous in the ungraceful tail dragging out behind! Women would go back to the loose-flowing, sleeveless chiton, the skirts that did not deprive them of freedom and the grace thereof, and the Easter bonnet would no longer be a horrible salad of ribbon and birds and flowers. Yet how odd they would loom in the trams, these Grecian deities, clinging to a strap and searching for pence in their swinging pockets! He smiled and went back to his reading. All this because the girl's hair was like the Golden Fleece, sparkling and alight.

All in the pervasive silence, Blaisdell worked on at his sketches, his first feverishness passing into the deliberate content of him who sees his work grow according to his desire. The hours wore themselves away as charmingly as petals fall from an opened rose, and only the click of Madame Cabert's needles, the faint scrunch of Blaisdell's charcoal and the flutter of a page of Ritchie's book were audible guarantee for the existence of the four of them. Motionless, serene, acquiescent, the girl sat in the sunlight that played upon her hair.

Then Lucia came out again to lay the cloth on the little table in the rude pergola, for high noon was upon them and the hour for *déjeuner* had come. Yet even she did not disturb the atmosphere of fair content about the place, but became a ministering presence, with suggestions of new delights and comforts in the near future. Her arrangements were almost complete

when Ritchie turned in the grass and sat up, according to his habit, with his arms about his knees. "Your two hours are up, Blaisdell," he said dreamily.

Blaisdell laid down the charcoal after one or two more leisurely strokes. He sat back and stared at his work and saw that it was good.

Madame Cabert had risen and was rolling up her knitting to return it to her capacious pocket. "You have finished with Léonie?" she asked.

"For this morning's work, yes. But you are going to take *déjeuner* with us!"

She looked faintly surprised and shook her head. "We will go home, monsieur," she said.

"But you see, Lucia has set places for you. She expects you, I expect you. Mr. Ritchie expects you!" He had a smile, this Blaisdell, that invariably got him what he wanted. The woman smiled, too, though a bit uneasily. She glanced toward the pergola, wondering how it would seem, if Lucia really had set their places, really did intend to wait upon them with her own hands. But Blaisdell misunderstood the look.

"Would you prefer to have *déjeuner* in the house?" he asked agreeably, as if it were quite settled that they would stay.

For the first time the girl spoke. Ritchie and Blaisdell had not realized, until she did so, that they had never heard her speak before. Her voice had a pathetic winsomeness, Ritchie told himself. And yet, hang it, that did not express it, either. It went into your heart as a woman might put her fingers in your hair, softly, gently, sweetly. If her voice had asked for a "yes," no human creature, man, woman or child, could have said "no" to it. It would have made a ravishing beauty of the ugliest woman on the earth. And its greatest perfection was its absolute unconsciousness. Women—a very few—have learned the trick of infusing such persuasion into their voices. This little girl did it without forethought. It was her voice, just

as her hair was her hair. The wild-flowers about her might have chimed just such sweetness had the Little People in whom Blaisdell would never believe set them to swinging like bells beneath their magic touch.

"Oh, do not let us go into the house," she said softly, turning about on her stool and for the first time facing them. "I hate houses."

Ritchie and Blaisdell exchanged a glance. As a pose, among girls they knew in London or in New York, they would have known how to meet it. But here in this anemone—! It was Ritchie who saved the situation, simply by saying, "So do I!" She looked at him and smiled, and cast a glance over the edge of the packing-box.

"Will you let me help you down?" he said.

She gave him her hand wonderingly. "It is not in the least necessary. I am so accustomed to climbing and jumping. Tell me, do you not find our Aosta beautiful?"

The mere words sounded sophisticated. And Ritchie saw as never before how the inevitable end of sophistication, like the end of a circle (if there were such a thing!), fits into simplicity. But here was a soul going the other way, if one might so express it. She had begun in simplicity, absolute and virginal. Pray God she should not end in sophistication and its pretenses.

"You see," she was saying, with that ease of hers that a practised social leader might have envied, "I have never been away from Tornenche. And I have never seen a picture of other places, or read a book in all my life. And so I cannot be sure that there are not many, many valleys as beautiful. Except that I feel it here—" she laid both hands, not upon her heart, but over her breasts in an untainted frankness. "It is wonderful, is it not?"

"It is one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen in all my life," said Ritchie with vehemence. He looked at her as she stood before him in the sunlight, her glittering hair falling over the dull blue of her slender

gown. And he became slowly ill at ease. He felt worldly and hard and old, before her—he who had a heart as warm as any boy's. His eyes fell and he turned away. Oddly the words, "I wish you knew my brother!" rose to his lips, but he did not speak them. Something in the frank innocence of her gesture had made him think of the unsullied poetic nature of the boy he loved, deep down beneath his semi-military, wholly British poise.

They had the same directness, the two of them, the same simplicity, the same heart-deep love of things beautiful. He touched the little book he carried in his pocket and resolved that she should have it. And indeed, before they went away, the two women, mother and daughter, he had drawn the little leather-bound volume from his pocket and proffered it to the older of the two.

"Will you read them?" he said. "And if you think they are pretty enough, will you let your daughter read them, too? My brother—he is just a boy. But they are rather nice."

The woman took them with a gentle willingness. "Thank you, monsieur," she said. "*À rivederci! À domani!*"

III

It did last, however, the charming quality of that first day, coloring all the days that followed with the same witchery of satisfactory simplicity. Whatever Léonie might develop in the future he came to be perfectly secure in the knowledge that it would never be banality. She said very little, but there was a sincerity in whatever she did say that robbed its crudeness of a jarring tone. He had had little to say to her in those days, for the silence of the workman and the silence of the model and the silence of the mother were acceptable in his sight, and in return he gave them his own. Also, after the first day they would by no means remain to *déjeuner*. Madame Cabert had made that plain enough on that occasion. She and her daughter

sat down to break bread with them without any awkwardness; they ate the delicious little repast from macaroni to ripe figs without any suggestion that they did not lunch in just such luxury at home. But she was quite frank about it, and quite determined, for all that she smiled with her broad flat face as pleasantly as if yielding to persuasion. "For one thing—two hours a day is enough for Léonie to spend, and for me. We have a great deal to do at home, in the garden and in making warm things for the Winter. Besides that there are other reasons. We cannot be as hospitable as you, so we cannot go on taking everything and giving nothing. Nor do I feel quite at ease in sitting here and letting my old friends, the Pasquales, wait upon me, as if I had climbed over their heads into your class, monsieur."

And that was an end on't. They came every day, Léonie as a homely little peasant to be transformed into a lovely little princess, and madame to sit knitting, watching the wonderful sketches accumulate. And the sketches were heaven-born; there was no mistake about that. Blaisdell drew the delicate, thin face with its wide brave eyes and masses of golden hair, from every conceivable viewpoint until he could have drawn it with his eyes bandaged. Ritchie would sit turning over the discarded pages, wondering at the accuracy of Blaisdell's touch, at the delicacy, the sympathy of the treatment. And always in them, growing more and more strong, from the first down to the latest one, was the feeling of the girl she was to portray. Deeper in the eyes Blaisdell managed to show the spirit of the inspired soul, the measureless forgiveness and the human anguish. Each sketch, more eloquently than the last, emphatically proclaimed that it was going to be a "big picture."

But the time came, as such times always do come, it would seem, when Ritchie had to go away from the beautiful valley of Tornenche in the heart of the Aosta, and leave the charming silence and the pleasant laziness. He

saw the big canvas only begun, but glowing with a promise of great things. Just as he had dreamed it, Blaisdell drew it. In the centre walked the tall, thin figure of the girl, in her straight dress under the mantle of her glowing hair, which hung short and heavy about her shoulders in a glimmering mass. It was a wonderful figure, with its fire of youth and patience of age, and with a resolute look in the face to think not of the torches and the fagots and the bitter, bitter jeers. The faces and figures about her were but roughly suggested when Ritchie last saw the canvas, with the exception of the face of the bystander who was snatching away the flag from the pollution of her touch, and the face of the soldier behind him who had locked him in his arms.

"It's indescribable, what you have put into the thing," said Ritchie. "It's more than history and emotion. It is a warning."

Blaisdell looked at him quickly as they stood before it, and back again. "A warning," he repeated, in assent.

When Léonie came that day she brought with her the little leather book of poems, and as she came alone because her mother was rather ailing, and as Blaisdell was within doors when she arrived, Ritchie met her on the grass of the little garden near the rude pergola. His kit-bags, all packed, were lying near the gate and he was dressed for his departure.

She held the book in her two hands. "It is the only book I have ever read," she said in that wonderful voice of hers, that went straight into the heart of her listener, "and I thank you. It is beautiful."

He was glad of her praise, simple countrywoman though she might be. "I thank you," he said, returning her phrase. "He is a nice boy, Julian. I think myself the verses are not bad."

"I am going to ask you," said Léonie quietly, "to let me keep it. It is a great deal to ask, I know. But even though there is a page written upon which I presume is to you—I have never read it—I am going to ask you to

let me have it. It is the first book I have ever read in all my life."

"You want it because it is the first?"

"I want it because I feel that I must have it," she answered directly. "I have not any reasons, except such as those. I should be miserable without it."

"You may have it, certainly," said Ritchie.

"I thank you again," she said, lifting her large child-eyes to him. "Tell me, what is he like, your brother?"

Ritchie glanced away over the fields, down the beautiful valley toward Zerbion. "Why, he is very young, you know——"

"How old?" she interrupted.

"Twenty."

"But—well, yes, for a man, I suppose that is young. I am fifteen, you know, and that feels quite old sometimes. Well, tell me—what does he do?"

"Do? Why, he goes about like the rest of us. He plays tennis, squash and golf, and rides. He won't dance and he won't shoot. He is fond of roughing it about the country and then he wants a plunge into artistic luxury. He writes for the sheer driving love of the thing, and is terribly afraid people will take him for a poet." Ritchie laughed. "He is always doing chivalrous, quixotic things, and he won't listen to any off-color stories."

"What is that?"

Ritchie blundered and grew red. "I forgot you would not understand. It's a bit of slang, American slang. Blaisdell told me the other day I ought not to mix up my English with idioms I did not understand." He was quite utterly confused, and made a frantic effort to swing her questioning eyes from his face. "If—if you would care to see what he looks like, I have a photograph of him here in my kit."

Instantly her look changed to one of radiance. "Oh, yes!" she said almost breathlessly.

He turned to his luggage, and kneeling in the grass beside it pulled and wrenched at straps and buckles until he had one bag open. She stood beside him looking down without curios-

ity, but certainly without any embarrassment, at the masculine array of brushes, collar-boxes and pajamas. From one side-pocket Ritchie drew a folding case of photographs, and opened it.

"No, that's not it, either. It's in the other bag," he said.

But she held out her hand. "May I see these, too?" she said. "I think photographs are such wonderful things."

"Aren't they, indeed?" he said heartily, though as a matter of fact he had never thought before how really remarkable the process was. He held up the case to her. "Surely you may see them. Julian's is in this other one, I remember now."

He dragged the other bag toward him and began the desperate process anew, of straps and locks and buckles to be subdued.

The girl opened the leather case, tucking her precious book under her arm to leave her hands free. "What a beautiful woman!" she said softly, as the first of the pictures lay before her.

"That is my mother," said Ritchie gravely. "She is dead now. Yes, she was very beautiful."

"But so high and fine!" The girl, untutored as she was, had caught at the essential mental attributes of the woman when a less straightforward mind would have seen the splendor of her dress and jewels.

"Yes," assented the man again. "She was fine. And high."

"And is the gentleman next to her your father?"

"Yes—the one in uniform."

The girl looked at them several moments in silence. Then her brows wrinkled. "Did it ever occur to you how strange it is that everyone should have a father and a mother?"

"God bless me!" Ritchie's exclamation was almost inaudible. "Why—why, no, I don't think I ever thought of it. It's—it's so usual one gets accustomed to it."

"I have never been accustomed to anything," she answered simply. "Everything seems so strange to me—"

even the nails on my fingers. I suppose—about fathers and mothers, I mean—every child needs the care a mother can give it and, as it grows up, the sort of learning that a father can give.” She brought up her voice at the end of the sentence, as if it were a question, so Ritchie desperately said, “I suppose so.” And below his breath again, “God bless me!”

“But sometimes they don’t always, do they?”

“Don’t always what?”

“Have a father and a mother. Of course I did, but my father is dead. Is yours?”

“Yes—long ago.”

“There was a girl in Châtillon,” said Léonie, “who killed her baby. I suppose if it had had a father he wouldn’t have allowed her to do that. She was insane, they said—so mother told me. But I thought it very odd they should have trusted her with anything so precious as a little child. Is this your sister?”

Ritchie, struggling blindly with the refractory kit-bag, did not look up. “No, that is my cousin, Helena Rexford. Those are her parents next her—he has been Julian’s guardian ever since my mother died.”

“She is very sweet. But I don’t like her mother.”

Ritchie laughed. The kit-bag was open at last, and he fumbled within for the photograph of Julian. “And her father,” said Léonie, gazing intently at him, “has a queer look.”

“How queer?” he asked, getting to his feet, his writing-case in his hand.

“I don’t quite know,” she replied slowly. “As if, perhaps, he had found out something he ought not to know.”

“Here is the picture of Julian,” said Ritchie hastily.

She lost all interest in the others instantly, as she took the single photograph from him. She lifted it and looked at it. “Oh!” she said. And after a pause, still more softly, “Oh!”

The photograph looked her squarely in the eyes, with as frank a serenity as her own. Under the light, close-cropped English hair the nobility of a

broad, fair forehead commanded attention. The eyes were deep-set, yet youthful beneath the slender, boyish brows. The nose was good, with narrow nostrils, but the mouth was of exceptional beauty. Large it was and curved in the very perfection of line—not pouting like the lips of the Greek faces, but firm and patient and sensitive all in one. The chin was square, almost too square for such a boyish face, and lifted with a touch of regal independence. One could see he had been an exceptionally exquisite child.

Ritchie, coming to stand and look over her shoulder at the face, was pleased again by her evident though silent admiration.

“It is very like him,” he said in a satisfied tone. “I wish you could see him, so you would understand. He is very grave there, but when he smiles—well, you feel as if someone had turned up all the lights.”

She did not answer, continuing to look into the picture’s eyes. Perhaps she was putting the man and his poetry together and trying to understand him better.

Ritchie stood, quite willing to endure her silence. It was curious, he was thinking—this little peasant girl who had never been out of Tornenche, she seemed to appreciate how unusual a face was that she looked on. And an impulse seized him that was irresistible at the moment and utterly inexplicable later on. “You may have the picture, too, if you like,” he said under the spell of the impulse. “Perhaps you would like to keep it with the book?”

“Oh!” she cried, but quite aloud and with a passionate gladness. She was quite radiant, even in the homeliness of her childish dress and hideous coiffure, as she turned to thank him. And he thought, with a smile, that she was a quaint little girl, and was glad he had given her such pleasure. Julian would laugh when he told him of the episode.

At the moment Blaisdell came out from the house, and seeing the confusion of Ritchie’s luggage stopped in mock despair. “You haven’t decided to stay!” he cried hollowly.

"Fear not," said Ritchie, "in the hour I depart, O Mortal!"

Blaisdell laughed, pulling out his watch as he came toward them. "That is true, you haven't much time. Been showing Léonie the family? Got a picture of Helena Rexford there? You said she had grown to be quite a beauty. Run into the house, Léonie, and get your gown on and your hair down. Lucia will help you. Where's your mother?"

"She is not well," said Léonie, moving obediently away, the picture in one hand and the book in the other. But Blaisdell had turned to the picture Ritchie pointed out to him.

"Glory, yes, she is splendid, isn't she? When I get those initials tacked after my name, that you are so anxious for me to have, I must do her portrait. That's old Lord Rexford, I remember him! And his wife, too—jimmy!"

"Do you know," said Ritchie, folding up the case, "that little monkey of yours in there hit them off at one clip—said Helena was sweet, that the old lady she did not like at all, and that Uncle Rexford looked as if he had found out something he ought not to know."

Blaisdell roared with laughter.

"I gave her Julian's book, and his picture," continued Ritchie, buckling his bags again. "Fancy—it is the only book she has ever read! Apparently she has not even been permitted to read the Bible, though I dare say her mother has read parts of it to her. I don't know what Julian will say to my having given his photograph away to a young lady from the Aosta. But she is such a child, it does not matter."

"Oh, of course not," said Blaisdell. "I must read the poems myself—they are quite proper for young persons like Léonie and me to read, I take it? By jingo, old man, I am going to be lonely without you. I'm sorry you must go. Must you now?"

"If not quite now, in a very few moments," said Ritchie. "They will go very quickly, so talk fast."

"I haven't anything to say," grinned Blaisdell. "Except the usual things:

let me hear from you, see you soon, and don't get your feet wet."

"If that's the best you can do," said Ritchie, rising and brushing at his knees, "get to work over there and let me leave you peacefully."

Blaisdell, with a complacent gesture, turned and walked toward his easel and stool. But Ritchie was not paying heed to this abnormal obedience, for just then Léonie came out again, dressed in her medieval robe and with her God-given hair loose about her shoulders. And somehow she did not look quite such a quaint little child as the peasant girl to whom he had given the book and the picture. She nodded to him, pushing back the curls from her face.

"I am saying the verses over and over in my head!" she cried sweetly. And then she straightened and repeated in English, with the most melting accent Ritchie had ever heard used in speaking that tongue, her hands outstretched at her sides and her head thrown back:

"Do you know the Sea of Tears?—
With its salt, salt brine, and the far, sad moans
Of the waves that grind through the labor-
ing years,
That curious sand of crowns and spears
And plows and pencils and bones."

She brought her eyes down and her hands fell at her sides. "I love it," she said in French again. "I feel it—deep down."

Ritchie eyed her somewhat in dismay. No, certainly she was not a child. And yet—he remembered the baby of the girl in Châtillon.

"Tell him it is beautiful," she said, coming nearer. "Tell him to go on—to go on and write some more." She lapsed into the English of the verses again:

"Do you know the Cruise of Life?
From one dim sand to a darker shore——"

"I say," called Blaisdell. "Come to work, Léonie. Monsieur Ritchie has a notion to leave us at our bench. He can better tear himself away if he feels that he is leaving work behind him."

She drew a breath, and then turning went silently across the grass, her blue gown flowing about her and her golden hair lifting in the soft air. Blaisdell over his shoulder laughed at Ritchie.

"Anything to please a guest," he said. "It's just the hair, today, Léonie—so you can rest your poor little back."

Ritchie pulled out the old familiar pipe and began to fill it inattentively. "I'm going to lie down here in the grass and smoke," he said half absently. "And when you have forgotten all about me I will silently steal away and meet the diligence." But his eyes were on the girl and he continued to stuff at the tobacco in the bowl of his pipe long after he might have lighted it.

IV

OF course, in spite of the fact that something had been said about their writing one to the other, it was a long time before Ritchie heard again from Blaisdell, nor indeed had he much to complain of there, for after his bread-and-wine letter he had not written either. A letter to London, forwarded to him in Scotland, gave little news. The picture was progressing famously. He had got the very breath of all outdoors into it and even Léonie was pleased. It was going to Paris now, to his studio, where he would touch it caressingly with brushes until he dared touch it no more. When was he, Ritchie, coming over? Another short note reached him on his return to London, Blaisdell was even then starting away from the beautiful Aosta. He wrote four lines in a melancholy mood—how he hated to return to the city! Vittorio and Lucia were sad over his departure. But he was coming back again and they would have the same Summer over again. Had he told him that Madame Cabert was dead? He had found one of Ritchie's tortoiseshell brushes in the drawer of the bureau, and would send it from Paris.

Little as he had thought of the girl

since his departure from Châtillon, it came with a shock to Ritchie to hear that she had suffered such bereavement. He wondered what she would do, now that she was alone. But Blaisdell would see to that. He had quite a lot of money, Blaisdell, from a defunct uncle once a manufacturer of machinery in New England—and he would see that the little girl was provided for. Probably she would enter a convent—poor little thing! He wished her innocence were going to a better home.

These were the only letters that passed between them, for when the Rexfords decided to descend upon Paris the April following, and Julian and Ritchie agreed to go with them, the latter had thought it pleasanter to surprise his friend with their presence and send no warning.

The picture of Joan of Arc had been exhibited in London, at a bad season of the year, and yet had raised no thin round of applause. But it was Julian Ritchie who had said the final say about it. Day after day he had gone to sit before it, trudging through the desperate weather at the imminent risk, according to Lady Rexford, of contracting a fatal case of pneumonia. He had fairly saturated his mind with the overwhelming beauty and tragedy of the thing, until finally at last it gave up to its own expression of the subject and the poem appeared. Because of the interest in the picture, the verses, which were good but not remarkable, were put rather to the fore, and Heath, who was publishing another book of Julian's stanzas, included in it the volume, for all its occasional quality. Then the canvas had been shipped back to Paris to await the judgment of the Salon, and quite as if they had chosen to follow it the Rexfords and the Ritchies crossed the Channel, too.

It was not a particularly happy crossing and neither was the day itself of a jubilant radiance. The ladies sought seclusion immediately upon arrival at the hotel, Julian repaired to the café with his uncle, one to satisfy a gnawing appetite and the other to re-

sume his acquaintance with dripped absinthe, while Ritchie, ugly as the weather might choose to be, set off for Blaisdell's place.

The house was a curious old affair, infested with painters, and the atmosphere of velvet caps, and penny bread, and patter-songs—an atmosphere commonly supposed to be legendary—was in every old nook and cranny of the place. Blaisdell having the machinery of Uncle Homer to depend upon, and not having to rely on what he could borrow from Jean or Jacques, had the best atelier in the house, a huge studio at the very top, with a deep gallery built across one side, which was partitioned into two tiny rooms. A queer little stair led down from this mezzanine—if one might so call it—and below it was a pantry and a store-room and yet another flight of little steps, a series of which led down through the back regions to the quarters of the concierge.

There was the usual collection of odds and ends that wait upon a painter's life, sketches piled to lean against the wall, pieces of gorgeous fabrics which had gone into his pictures, manikins and casts, a dusty model throne, a few rickety chairs and two really comfortable ones, a long bare table impartially stained with paint and certain dark rings that spoke eloquently of Blaisdell's hospitality, a battered old easel, and a few very fine things, such as a high carved settle, some Genoese velvet pillows, a superb swinging silver lamp and a small cabinet of beautiful china.

Blaisdell was just putting on his coat to go out and was standing in a contorted attitude, half in and half out of it, when he called his "*Entrez!*" to Ritchie's knock. But in the instant that the stolid blond head of the Englishman appeared in the doorway the coat was flung down in a heap on the floor, and Blaisdell cried a great "Hello!"

They shook hands with a violence. "Well, of all folks!" said Blaisdell. "Where did you come from? Why didn't you let me know?"

"I am letting you know," replied

Ritchie. "I am here. We have just come from Dover, and I don't believe—unless in her present debilitated condition she had gone to bed with it on—that my respected aunt has even yet unpinning her bonnet."

"Then you did come with flattering promptness. And an aunt?"

"Aunt, cousin, uncle, brother, maid, valet and luggage. He travels the fastest who travels alone. But you were just going out—was it important? I ask only for the sake of form. In any event I should keep you—"

"Important! I should say not. I was going out to get rid of an attack of the blues."

"Allow me to do that for you," said Ritchie, who had put down his wet coat and hat, laid his stick across them and slapped down his gloves. "Give me your most comfortable chair, a drink of Scotch, a cigar and your society, and the blues are gone."

The Scotch and the cigar were forthcoming and they gave themselves to the comfort of the great chairs and talked. It is said that only women gossip, and if that is to be given credence it were well that no women eavesdroppers lingered to overhear the conversation between the two men. All the old friends in England were gone over, and left in genial ruins. Blaisdell's new acquaintances were likewise tenderly torn limb from limb. But Ritchie was right about the blues.

"And what about little Léonie Cabert?" asked Ritchie, cutting the end of a fresh cigar. "You said her mother died—what became of her?"

"Became of her?" said Blaisdell, stopping short in a motion of his glass. "Why, she is here, of course. Here with me."

"Oh—here." Ritchie's voice had an odd note in it. He merely glanced up from his occupation, and down again.

"There wasn't any place for her to go, you know," said Blaisdell as if really Ritchie might have seen that for himself. "She was so wretchedly lonely. So we just took her away from the little house where her mother died, and

brought her up to my place and Lucia took care of her."

"She did not want to stay with Lucia, I suppose?" Ritchie's keen eyes came up again with the question.

"Why, no—" said Blaisdell, and to his intense displeasure the deep red of the rare flush rose in his face. "You see, Lucia and Vittorio were all right in their way, but although they belonged to the same class socially they did not mentally, they and the Caberts."

"I see," said Ritchie.

Blaisdell got up and squared his shoulders negligently. He was relieved that the inexplicable embarrassment had gone. He did not wish to appear as a cad who will give it to be understood that a woman cares too much for him to allow him to leave her, and even in the plain statement of Léonie's not wanting to remain at the Pasquales' he felt that he was giving that impression. "She has changed a lot, of course," he said. "You would scarcely know her."

"Why, of course?" asked Ritchie, shutting his knife with a snap.

"Well, she is no longer a little girl. You remember the daily transformation I used to effect with the gown at Châtillon? We have, so to speak, caught the transformation, fixed it, nailed it."

"That's very odd," said the other, lighting his match.

"Odd? I don't see why! She was fifteen then, and had never set foot beyond Tornenche. Now she is sixteen and has been about a little. She is a woman. I don't mean she is not still girlish. But there is a difference."

"And now that I have been sufficiently prepared," said Ritchie very slowly, his lighted cigar in one hand, his dead match in the other and his eyes fixed again upon Blaisdell, "perhaps I may be permitted to see her? Is she at home?"

Blaisdell laughed a bit. "I haven't been preparing you," he said. "Nothing I could say could do that. Wait and see."

Ritchie nodded and rose as Blaisdell went toward the little stair. He flung

the match into the basket viciously, and stood frowning savagely after it. "Oh, what a shame!" he said between shut teeth. "What a damn shame!" He stood so while he listened to Blaisdell's voice.

"Oh—Léonie! O-oh, Léonie!"

He stood so while he heard a door open, but his head came up with a jerk as her voice answered, although he did not look around. "What is it?" she asked. Her voice had the same sweet, melting accent; at any rate, that was quite unchanged.

"There is someone here I want you to see," said Blaisdell pleasantly. "Come down, won't you?"

"Certainly," she said.

No, the voice was not unchanged. There was a new wistfulness in it that made it even more poignantly sweet.

As Blaisdell turned from the stair he said: "Here she is. You hear, we talk English now, sometimes!"

Ritchie incontinently pitched the cigar on which he had expended so much trouble into the fireplace as he wheeled about and went to meet her. When she saw who it was she paused on the step and looked again.

She was changed. Good heavens, he should rather think so! In some amazing way she had become radiantly beautiful, but the radiance was not that of happiness. Her figure was still slender and girlish, but in the Gobelin-blue frock she wore it showed a more womanly fulness. There was a dainty white ruffle about her throat, and others at her elbows—the only ornament of the gown. But the simplicity and rich coloring showed her off to the greatest advantage. Her hair was gathered up into a great knot in the nape of her neck, but so arranged about her face that the rippling waves of it loosed a series of glittering curls about her brows and ears. She had a faint color in her cheeks, but it was sufficient to contrast exquisitely with the whiteness of the rest of her. Her eyes were large and sweet and blue as ever, but there was something new in them, too, something dawning, not quite fully born, something accursedly like pain.

She knew him in the little pause, and a light note of pleasure came into her voice. "Monsieur Ritchie!" she said. Then she came down to him. "Oh, he did go on, didn't he?" she said as she gave him her hand. "And so splendidly. And oh, the verses about me, about Joan of Arc! They made me happy."

It seemed almost as if there had been no break in their conversation, interrupted that day in the little ragged garden of the Pasquales' to be resumed almost a year later. She stood there before him in the same attitude, her head thrown back, her eyes looking upward. They were the same beautiful eyes, but there was something new in them which he could not bear to see.

"Have you thought of nothing but that wretched brother of mine since we parted?" he asked lightly.

She answered him in no such mood. "Nothing!" she said almost vehemently but very softly. "Nothing, nothing, nothing!"

"It's quite true, upon my soul," said Blaisdell, joining them. "You remember the picture you gave her? She has it on her dressing-table in the most beautiful frame all Paris could offer, and any time of the day or night that one would please to go to her door one would find her reading the verses."

"Not reading them!" she corrected. "I know them all, in my heart."

"A most flagrant case of hero worship," said Blaisdell, seating himself again. He put out his hand and taking hers drew her down upon the arm of his chair. "How would you like some tea, Britisher?" he asked, leaning his head back against the leather cushion. He looked the picture of domestic comfort, but the girl flushed a little, and Ritchie met with a pang at the heart the quick, questioning look she gave him. She moved a little, loosening her hand from Blaisdell's, then she rose.

"I will make some tea anyway," she said. "For myself, I should like some, and possibly when it is all ready you two will bear me company."

"I confess to wanting it tremendously," said Ritchie. "Can I help you?"

"By looking as comfortable as your host there," she replied graciously as she moved away. He watched her in a sad fascination as she set about her preparations. The little beruffled apron she tied on over her skirt was the last touch her costume needed. Ritchie, remembering his Stevenson, said to himself that Blaisdell had indeed domesticated an angel, even if not one of the recording kind. She moved about so much at home, so quietly, yet always with that new strangeness upon her. He could watch the changes in her face as she became absorbed in the pretty task of tea-making and as her thoughts released themselves from that servitude and the look in her eyes returned with its old eloquence to haunt him. Her glorious hair seemed to draw all the light in the great room and to glow like a fire. She was very beautiful. And Blaisdell was very charming. It was no wonder that things were as they were. And yet what a shame it was, he said again fiercely to himself, what a damned shame!

Blaisdell talked on, as ever inconsequential and good-natured. Many of his questions concerning the Rexfords went unanswered, but he hardly seemed to notice that, and talked on. There was one question, however, that when he came to it he insisted upon having entertained. Did Ritchie think he might paint a portrait of Helena Rexford? "Not as an order, you know," he laughed. "I should be glad to present it to your aunt and uncle after it has been shown. But I've been painting this little blond Léonie so much I should like to try my hand at a dark beauty. And just now I have gone stale and am prowling around with nothing to do."

"If there is any danger of your falling into one of your memorable moods, the lack of occupation mood," said Ritchie, inhaling the fragrance of his tea, "I shall consent now, even if Helen has to be brought here by force."

Léonie, who preferred her tea cool and was therefore unencumbered at

present by her cup, stood near to Ritchie, leaning back upon both hands against the table. "Your cousin Helena—is that the sweet girl in the picture, with the gentle face?"

"Yes—she is just that. The sweetest, gentlest girl that ever lived, but she lacks spirit. She never says that her soul is her soul, and indeed I don't know that it is."

The girl nodded sagely. "It's her mother's," she said, "the lady with the shut mouth."

"Right again," said Ritchie, with an amused look at Blaisdell over his lifted tea-cup.

"And they are here with you?" She did not quite ask it as a question. Blaisdell's talk had given her to understand that they were.

"Perhaps it would be more respectful," said Ritchie, with his old whimsicality, "to say that my brother and I are here with them."

In an instant she had straightened. "Your brother?" she cried. "Not Julian?"

"Why, yes," said Ritchie.

"Oh!" she said. And then again, "Oh!" The fervor of the familiar little expression reminded him of the old days in the garden at the Pasquales, where everything had been so perfect and so different. He finished his tea at a gulp, although it was torturously hot, almost unconscious of the action in the bitterness with which he said to himself again, "Oh, what a shame it is! What a damned shame!"

The little pause only made her more eager. "Why did you not bring him with you?"

Ritchie put down his cup, with an attention to the matter that even its exquisite quality hardly seemed to deserve. "Why, he was hungry!" he said at last, in a too natural voice. "He was in the café with my uncle when I left, eating a hearty breakfast. I should not have had the heart to interrupt him. And the heart in this case, as in others, means courage, for a hungry young Englishman at meat is not to be disturbed."

He met her eyes as he rose, but he

could not understand them, though they never wavered in their regard. "When will you bring him?" she said.

"You can imagine, my dear fellow," said Blaisdell, rising, too, "how anxious she is to see this paragon. I—if you please—I, who first made her famous, am as nothing compared to this young interloper who came after."

"If there had not been unpleasant associations with the unimpeachable reply, I should say to you that I am not my brother's keeper." Ritchie was moving to get his coat as he spoke, and his voice was as ever calm and—too natural. "He will be most anxious to meet you, of course. I believe he is going off with some friends in a motor-car for a week or two, but he will be back again."

She did not move from the spot where she stood as he delivered himself of this. But her eyes followed him fixedly. Blaisdell, with the detaining words of the host, joined him, helping him on with his coat.

The operation of resuming some of the protection against the inclement weather was consummated, the last cheery words were said, and Ritchie took his departure. And yet Léonie did not move, but looked at the place where he had stood as if he still were there.

V

BLAISDELL, coming out of his room on to the balcony, rolled a pair of socks into a ball.

"Hi, catch!" he cried.

Léonie, seated at the little table where she did her sewing, looked up at him where he stood in his shirt-sleeves.

"A pair you overlooked, my dear!" he said.

She laid down her basket as if to come forward, but he called again: "Don't stir, you can catch it there. For that matter, if you will hold up the basket I can pitch it in as neatly as a mouse goes into a trap."

At this she lifted the basket again and held it tilted toward it. "There, how's that?" he cried.

"Good," she commented, nodding.

"I don't think, you know," said Blaisdell, pulling at the ends of his white lawn tie, "that you ought to sew by so poor a light."

She glanced at the lamp beside her and up at him. "I can see perfectly," she replied. "Aren't you going to be late?"

"Dear me, yes, I'm afraid so." He dodged back into his room and left the door swinging. She went on with her sewing, and Blaisdell whistled at his toilet.

Then, unexpectedly, there came a knock at the door, and promptly, at her half-intended response, it opened and a gentleman came in. She rose instantly, her work in her hands.

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure!" said the gentleman, apparently retreating. "Je fou demande mill pardongs," he added in execrable French.

"I speak English," said Léonie Cabert. "Please come in, this is Mr. Blaisdell's." She had recognized him instantly. "You are Lord Rexford," she said.

"How did you know that?" exclaimed the visitor. As he came forward into the light she saw that his picture had flattered him. He was a little man, about sixty, dressed in too perfect a smartness for one of his age, for super-nattiness invariably suggests an effort at youthfulness or youthfulness itself. There was more than a look in his face that he had found out something he ought not to know. There was a something about his entire person that said eloquently, even to her ignorance of such signs, that he not only knew it, but was glad of it. He had been good-looking once, and such remains of it as he had not obliterated by too good and too bad living made him still a distinguished figure. He had a pleasant way—a good-humored way. But the smile was insistent, as if it, too, was glad he knew things that he should not know. When he looked at her, as he had not ceased doing since he crossed the threshold, he did it in a way that was quite new to her. Most people in speaking to her looked at her face. He looked at her waist, the line of her

shoulders, the turn of her arm—and continued to smile.

"But I know you, too!" he said. "You are Joan. We all know you. You have made Blaisdell famous. Or he has made you famous. I don't know which. Both probably."

"My real name is Léonie Cabert," she said, instinctively stiffening. What was there about the man that made her draw back?

Blaisdell, hearing voices, stepped to his door again, still in his shirt-sleeves. "Hello, who's there?" he called.

Rexford, on that, turned about. "It is only I," he said, screwing in his glass. "The others have gone on ahead to the theatre. I was following, and it occurred to me that we might go together if I stopped for you."

"Well, do pardon me for keeping you waiting, I'll be right down," said Blaisdell, plunging into his room once more for his coat and outdoor things.

"Pray don't distress yourself," retorted Rexford, turning back. "Don't stand, I beg of you, Miss Cabert. I remember now hearing my nephew George speak about you. You were in—" He waved a vague hand searching for the name.

"My home was in Châtillon," she answered, sitting down. Her eyes occupied themselves for the most part with her work, but could not resist coming up every now and then to look at him—he was so very strange. He stood near her, calmly staring at her hair and her lovely color.

"Châtillon, that's the place," he said. "And then when Mr. Blaisdell left you came with him to Paris?" he added. There was something about the smile accompanying the question that made her wish with all her heart she could say no, and yet she knew no earthly reason why she should. "Yes," she said, dropping her eyes again. For the first time in all her life she experienced the shyness in which, in Ritchie's mind, she had been so frankly lacking.

"And how do you like living here?" he asked.

"I miss my mother very much," she

said naturally. "And I often wish I was back in the country."

"I should not think Mr. Blaisdell would let you wish for anything."

"In other ways, he doesn't. He is very good to me. But he can't prevent my wishing things like that," she said.

"I would undertake to, in his place!" said Rexford. She looked up, puzzled. But at that moment Blaisdell came running down. She noticed, for she was still looking at the man when he turned, that his manner changed, infinitesimally yet perceptibly, when the master of the house drew near. It made her vaguely angry.

"I am so sorry to have kept you waiting," said Blaisdell, "and it was so good of you to drop in to get me. Will you have anything before we go? You've been talking to Miss Cabert? Fancy Joan of Arc darning socks!"

"You ought to paint her so, my dear fellow. The other side of the shield! The domestic woman instead of the woman with a career. No woman, I swear, ever wore anything half so becoming as an apron!"

Léonie rose and put away her work. "I will get the Scotch?" she said questioningly. "Or—something else?" She looked at Blaisdell, but was conscious of the other man's eyes.

"What will you have, Lord Rexford?" inquired the host. "A Scotch-and-soda, or a cognac——?"

Rexford had been about to refuse. But here he screwed his glass in again and smiled at the girl. "I should decline but for the pleasure of being waited upon by such a Hebe," he said.

The very flatness of the remark called out a laugh from Blaisdell. "You must not pay Léonie compliments," he said. "She is only a little girl. She doesn't understand them. Shall it be cognac?"

"Thank you, yes," said Rexford, as Léonie moved away. He looked sharply at his host through that smile of his. Was the man actually going to pretend to him, Rexford, that this "little girl" was unused to compliments? Was he going to attempt any such preposterous undertaking as to make him,

Rexford, believe a girl with such a face and such a figure went on in life without being made love to? And what other way was there to make love to a woman except to flatter her?

"This is a—er—remarkably charming place you have here," said Rexford, lowering his eyes and strolling off.

"It's a barn!" cried Blaisdell emphatically. "Upon my soul, when your daughter was good enough yesterday to express a wish to see it, I hesitated—I did, indeed! She probably expects the sort of thing you read of in the novels such as 'Mrs. Wititterly' used to affect—silk rugs nine deep on the floor, and priceless objects of art flung all about. I'm afraid one look at this bare place would be quite enough for her."

Rexford's eyes roamed about idly, yet every time they rested on Blaisdell, even momentarily, they became keener. "And what a charmingly odd arrangement that balcony is now," he said.

"Those are our bedrooms, Léonie's and mine," said Blaisdell. "I made arrangements when we first came here to have her live elsewhere, but she"—he glanced about him to be sure she was out of hearing—"she is so remarkably beautiful and so unimaginably innocent that I decided it was better to have her here. Sometimes I fancy she is very lonely. She goes out only for little walks and pleasure jaunts with me—I don't encourage her to make friends among such people as there are about us, for I don't want her to— Ah, thank you." He turned at the sound of her crossing the room, and went toward her to take the tray. But even in the act of taking it from her hands he paused, looking at her intently. "Are you not feeling well, my child?" he asked kindly.

"Well, I am rather tired, you know," she said quietly. "It is early yet, but I think if you will excuse me, you and Lord Rexford, I will go to bed." She turned toward the guest as she spoke his name, but her eyes did not meet his. The question of the vague anger she felt against him she fancied she had solved. And while she reproached

herself for such a petty feeling, she found herself unable to rid herself of it. The reason he treated her with a shade of something she could not name, but which was certainly less courteous than his manner to Blaisdell, must be because she was poor and of peasant origin. Perhaps, after all, that was why they had not asked her to go with them, these fine people! She had never had such a thought before and she was ashamed of it. Yet deep in her heart she had been hurt at the exclusion of herself from the invitation, though she saw that Blaisdell had not appeared to notice it. She had decided afterward that they did not know she was there—as indeed they did not!—and that Mr. Ritchie must have omitted to speak of her—as indeed he had! But now her sensitive instinct told her she was being treated in a way that was new and most unpleasant, and she resolved upon the simple expedient of removing herself from its reach. She bade them good night, and went away, up the stairs and into her little room. And there in the loneliness that swept down upon her she lay on her bed fully dressed and cried like the child that she was. Everybody else had gone to the theatre, to supper, to a good time, and she had been left at home.

She did not know it then, but she was mistaken in her sweeping estimate. Everybody had not gone to the theatre.

Fully an hour and a half after Blaisdell's departure with Lord Rexford the door at the top of the last flight of stairs opened again, slowly, but this time without any preliminary knock. And the figure that came to a stand upon the threshold was not a small one of sixty or thereabouts, but a tall, straight and youthful one.

It was Julian Ritchie who came in, alone, and shut the door behind him. There was not in his manner the hesitation of a man who fears to disturb some occupant of the place he has invaded. The hesitancy was evidently only for the being there at all without an invitation or permission.

Just that was occupying his mind at the moment of his entrance. But he

dismissed it with a "Rot, what harm? He's welcome to make himself at home in my place any time." Thus the matter was disposed of.

He took off a raincoat, for the weather was still inclement, and tossed it down on a chair. He was in evening dress, and it became him well. He was very young, he was a poet, he was in love, and he was alone where he wanted to be.

Up went his head and he "drank the air as if it had been wine." "At last!" he said sincerely. He looked about him slowly. "She must surely have been here some time," he said to himself. "Perhaps she has stood just where I am standing now. Perhaps she has touched this chair with her hand—perhaps she has looked toward the door. Oh, how I want to see her myself!" He pitched his arms outward on the words. Underneath the glamour of unreality that his poeticism had thrown about his adoration of the beauty he had never seen there was a very boyish, human hunger—real to the point of pain. He touched one of the red Genoese velvet cushions on its golden ecusson and thought that she may have leaned against it. He wondered if she had ever spoken in this very space of air a word as he breathed her name, "Léonie"—just for the happiness of listening to the syllables.

He had wanted to be in a room where she had been, to go about in it alone and try to imagine her in it. He had asked George about her, but the brother had given no satisfactory reply. Ritchie had spoken vaguely about the Aosta, and her "people" and had turned the talk by urging the lad to go motor-ing with the Harleys. It would seem, however, that, having accepted the invitation, he subsequently refused it, and the Harleys had gone off in a huff. Now it was too late, thank heaven. Ritchie did not know it, but the boy wanted to be in Paris just because she had been there once, and because he could see the painting of Joan later at the Salon.

Now, on the occasion of the family being at the theatre, and of Blaisdell's being with them, he had managed to

condense that presence which continually hovered about him, into one room, and here to enjoy it for a brief hour. That Léonie was anywhere within a hundred miles he no more guessed than he heard her some minutes later coming down the little stairs toward which his back was turned. He was standing, one knee on the settle, his chin resting on his clasped hands. He might have been Apollo weaving songs, or just a very clean-looking fine young lad wondering if Jennie would be going to the dance.

Léonie herself did not think this. She came to a sudden halt on the stairs on seeing him, and her mind was divided between two thoughts—one, that she wondered who he was, and two, that she had been crying and was not looking her best.

She had made no sound, yet as she came to that startled halt he must have felt some wave of her emotion in the air, for he lifted up his head with a jerk and after an instant's pause whirled about.

The room was not very well lighted, and they saw one another but dimly. Yet the realization of one another's personality seemed to come to them, for they did not speak as they would have to any other persons. Motionless they stood and looked. If he had not felt that it was she, he would have begun a prompt apology for his intrusion. If she had not felt that it was he, some question would have come to her lips.

Then very slowly she came down the rest of the stairs and crossed the room toward him, and he waited. When she was quite near him, to his amazement, she stopped and laid her hand upon her breast. "You!" she said.

"But no—it is you!" he returned, half smiling. "To think—" he looked over her shoulder at the little stair down which she had come, as if he wondered in an afterthought if the top of it might not be leaning against clouds. "You!" he repeated. "And you know me?"

"Know you!" His faint smile was mimicked in her face. "I—know you?"

"How should you, then? Who am I?"

"Julian Ritchie."

He nodded. "That is very true!"

"And who am I?" she returned.

"Ah, I can make no merit of knowing that. All the world knows that face of yours."

"You mean the Joan of Arc? Ah, yes, but she is three parts Hunter Blaisdell. While I am only Léonie Cabert."

"I was just saying your name aloud to myself when you came down."

She looked about her for the first time. "Did you come to see me?"

"To see you? Why, I had no idea you were here."

"Then why were you here? And saying my name aloud?"

"To invoke you!" he smiled. "I know you must have been here once."

"Because of the picture?"

"Yes."

Her face was still uplifted to his with an eager happiness. He, looking down into her eyes, felt his whole fantastic dream of longing for her becoming alive with a new and tremendous personality. His heart began to throb faster with the sense of her realness, her nearness. If love were consequent upon the perception of loveliness, here indeed was the normal time for it to appear. For the beauty of her was far greater than he ever dreamed, and he had dreamed long and well.

"But you didn't know I was here? Didn't your brother say he had seen me?"

For an instant a hideous silence flashed through the space between them. "George lied!" said the boy to himself. "Why?" Then, having at least the justification of a reason, he lied, too. "I haven't seen George," he said.

But the chill of something alien had struck them both. She moved a little from him and sat down in the carved high-back settle with the red cushions behind her. She had felt the indefinable change. Perhaps—that was it again! She was not fine enough for these great people. It was one thing

that Ritchie should be pleasant and kind to her when away from his people and the restrictions of conventionality. But here where they were all together he did not even mention her! The old pain came again and she almost felt the tears once more in her eyes.

Julian took his place beside her, sitting boyishly with one foot under him, turned so as to face her. "Something is the matter," he said quietly.

She was tremulously glad in his quick appreciation of her trouble. And in the very realization that he at least was there, he at least was not too fine to come to see a peasant girl, she felt her happiness blossom. "Nothing can be the matter," she said.

He watched her a moment in silence, filling his heart with her. "You did not tell me how you knew me," he said at last.

"I have had your picture before me every day, and many, many hours of the day, for nearly a year now. Surely I ought to know your face!"

"My picture?"

"Mr. Ritchie gave it to me when he was down in Châtillon with Mr. Blaisdell. He gave me your book first, but that was because I asked for it. I had read the verses over till I knew them by heart, but I wanted the book just the same. Then came the new one and the verses to me, and it seemed as if my heart would burst with joy and with delight in the beauty of the poem. I kissed the page a hundred times."

An older poet than Julian Ritchie might have felt his head swim a little under such praise from such lips.

"I put it word by word into my heart," she said.

"It came word by word from mine," he returned. "Yet—now that I see you, really you, Léonie, I see that it was only a painted song, sung to a painted face. But you shall have real songs, real Léonie, I promise you."

They sat smiling, watching one another in their innocence, though his was part of his world-wide knowledge and hers of an engulfing ignorance. His use of her familiar name was no boldness. She could no more be called

by him more formally than he could have addressed Juno as Mrs. Jupiter, had he been magically admitted to that fabulous presence.

"What happiness!" he said at last softly.

She moved in the glow of it as in warm sunshine. "I can hardly believe in you yet," she said. "I was so miserable a little while ago—I had been crying."

"I saw that," he answered. "It is a good thing."

"Good?"

"It means that either you think or you feel—and those are both the good things of the world."

"I am afraid," she faltered, "that my thoughts were not of the good kind. I was crying because I was silly enough to want to go with the others to the theatre. See—that I should have missed you if I had!"

She put out her hand toward him quite naturally. And he took it in the same way. "And why didn't you go?" he asked.

"Ah, that was just it—with your people? I wasn't invited."

"But if they did not know——"

"Mr. Ritchie knew. And your uncle."

"Uncle Rexford?"

She nodded. "He was here. He came for Mr. Blaisdell. He stayed and talked and drank cognac. But I did not like him and I went away. He made me feel cross when he looked at me—I don't know why."

Julian Ritchie looked down in silence at the hand he was so gently holding. But she brushed the ugly question away. "Don't let us think of my silly childishness," she said. "The important thing is that I came downstairs to find you here, you of all people—here of all places. And that we are here together."

"It is important," he answered, looking up with the shadow banished from his face. "It grows more important every moment I sit here with you. It will soon be absolutely essential."

"You know I have dreamed—awake!—of seeing you. But you are nicer than I thought," she said judiciously.

"So are you," he retorted, smiling. "I didn't know for one thing you had so much of that yellow hair."

"Because it wasn't in the picture? Well, you see, of course, Mr. Blaisdell painted it short."

"Of course. You wouldn't go to war with long hair!"

"But it had time to grow a little, while I was in prison."

"Exactly." They laughed together for the mere joy of hearing their voices mingle. "For another thing I did not know you spoke English—and so prettily. I wish I could make words sound as you do. I tell you, we must give recitals—and you will read my verses to people, and then everyone will say I am a great poet."

"They say that now," she said.

"Nonsense and gammon!"

"At least they say you surely will be."

He was serious a moment. "At least I will try," he said. "And you will help me, won't you?"

"I? I could not help you. I can only admire you and love you."

"But will you do that?"

"Will I do it? I can't help doing it. It does itself."

He drew his breath in deeply. "Enough to marry me?" he said.

"To marry you?" she repeated blankly. "Why should we marry?"

"So that I could have you with me all the time," he said. But his voice shook and something she did not understand was trembling in the fingers that closed upon hers. She felt the warmth of his hand in her palm.

"But you might get very tired of that," she replied, without any intention but that of letting him see the truth. "I am not clever like you. You would find me stupid. I have never read anything even."

"I would read to you," he said. "Oh, to think of sitting with you on some radiant day in the beautiful outdoors and watching you make acquaintance with the dear people that I love in the books that have been written. Good heavens—not to have read anything! What a glorious time we shall have!"

"But couldn't we do that without getting married?"

"Could we? We will. We will begin tomorrow. If it clears we will go out into the country, and I will read to you, and talk to you, and look at you, and adore you. Will you do that? It would please you to do that?"

"Yes, yes!" She leaned eagerly toward him.

"But I don't see," he added, "why you don't want to marry me."

She laughed a little. "I never could see why people married," she said. "It seems so unnecessary."

"I'll teach you to know better," he cried, kissing her hand gently.

VI

BLAISDELL, in his shirt-sleeves again, but not those this time of a pristine whiteness, was messing about alone in the studio. Piles of scattered sketches lay about. On the easel he had just perched a large drawing of a nude woman, both hands lifted to her hair. "That's not half bad," he said, drawing back and screwing up his face into a series of horrible grimaces.

"Not villainous at all," said he, "though I dare say it is one of the things that must be whisked away if Lady Rexford consents to her daughter's setting foot in this dangerous quarter. Come in! *Entrez!*"

"My dear Blaisdell," drawled a voice at the door, "I am in. I am knocking on the inside. I knocked on the outside and you did not answer!" Lord Rexford, screwing at the monocle he wore with a desperate attempt to be quite as English as an American residing in Paris could possibly expect, came forward. "Now don't apologize again and don't put on your coat. You did that the last time I was here."

"Very well, then, I'll do neither," said Blaisdell, laughing. He had been on the point of doing both.

Rexford came around the easel to look at the sketch. "As you say, my dear fellow, it is not villainous in the

least. I commend it highly. Is it the little Joan of Arc—sans armor?"

"Why, yes," said Blaisdell. "Léonie did pose for the head and shoulders. One day the girl who was posing for the thing was ill, and Léonie offered to take her place. It was almost as nearly done then as it is now. I never finished it. Still—it's good, isn't it? I haven't touched it since."

"It's very admirably done," said Rexford, turning a smiling pair of little eyes on Blaisdell. "I couldn't have done it better myself."

"I should appreciate the praise more fully," said the other, smiling, "if I had seen what you could do."

"I have never painted," said the little old reprobate, "but I have learned to lie."

Blaisdell frowned and then laughed. "It is a small matter. Believe me or not as you wish. Won't you sit down?" He did slip into his coat as the guest turned and sauntered toward the settle. "I'll give you a Scotch. What a beautiful day it has turned out to be!"

"Excellent—both ideas," said Rexford. "And where is the little châte-laine?"

"Léonie? Why, she has gone out. I haven't seen her since you have. She was asleep when I got home last night, and gone out before I was awake this morning." He potted about among the glasses on a shelf in the pantry, and presently came back to the settle carrying a tray which he set down on a little table. "It was very good of you to drop in like this," he said. "Where is George?"

"Bless me if I can say! I shouldn't be in the least surprised if he had bolted off somewhere. You don't suppose they have gone together, do you?" He did not wait for a retort, but went on, after a snigger of amusement: "I did not come in without a purpose. Frankness, my dear Blaisdell, before all things."

"Before even one learns to lie?" asked the other, mixing his own brew after he had supplied his guest. "And what was the object indeed?"

"Well, I come, so to speak, as an en-

voy. I am not a spy nor am I an ambassador. But I was sent, and rather sharply sent, too!"

"The plot thickens," said Blaisdell, sitting down in one of the two easy-chairs. "Your health."

"And yours. My dear fellow, the plot that a married man has to cope with is always thick, thick sometimes to suffocation."

"Then the mission has somewhat to do with her ladyship?"

"What hasn't?" groaned Rexford. "All the disagreeable things I have to do emanate from her and all the pleasant ones have to be kept from getting back to her." He drank of his Scotch, and smiled. "Don't you ever marry, Blaisdell, unless you can get a woman like Helena who would believe her own name was Polly Atkins if one told her so. Here we are, then. Pray forgive me."

"I should be greatly indebted to you if you would only get on from where we are now. You know quite well that in any way I can serve you or your wife or your daughter, I shall only be too glad of the chance."

"Well, the point is, my dear fellow, you—being somewhat hit with Helena——"

"I admit the charge," said Blaisdell half seriously.

"—wishing to brighten her stay in Paris with a dull father and an over-sharp mother, proposed giving us a little party here at the studio tonight."

"I did indeed—but from more selfish motives than you ascribe to me. But that surely is not, after all, the point?"

"No, but it's part of it," said Rexford, recrossing his legs. "We accepted, on the spot, *à l'est*, the lobby of the theatre. Now is where the plot begins to thicken. At home in the seclusion of our much-upholstered conjugal bedroom at the hotel, I was ass enough to mention the little girl."

"Do you mean Léonie?"

"I do. The result of my indiscretion was that I was kept awake an hour after by a series of explosive remarks—the gist of which I can give you while sparing you the wearisome details."

Blaisdell put down his glass somewhat sharply. "I do not see why you committed any indiscretion in mentioning Miss Cabert's name," he said.

"You did not mention it, my boy, once during the evening," returned Lord Rexford.

To his disgust, Blaisdell reddened. "I had nothing to say about her. I was talking with your daughter about other things."

"I should fancy so!" said Rexford. "Well, the gist of the aforesaid explosive remarks was that she did not know you were the sort of man to have your model living with you, and that you were off the books."

"But—but——"

"One moment," interposed the other, raising his glass. "In one of the few, brief, available intervals I told her it was nonsense—that the girl did not live here, that I had come upon her doing the mending, and that many models in Paris eked out their meager pay by being of use in the household—and I'd swear to that at any rate!"

"But she does live here!" said Blaisdell.

"Of course, my dear fellow—but I told you I had learned to lie! After much protesting and arguing I finally convinced her that you would never have invited herself and Helena here if your model did live here with you, and that it was all right. But she insisted I was to come around today and make sure, and here I am."

"But—" cried Blaisdell again, "it's all rot! Léonie is all right! She came to live with me like a little kitten or a canary bird. She is a pleasant little thing to have about, and I was sorry for her. Besides, down there in Châtillon it seemed the natural thing to do. She would have died of loneliness. She hadn't a sou. And she was fond of me as if I were her brother. There has never been the slightest question of any other feeling."

"Admirably done," said Rexford into his glass. "A pleasant little thing to have about—I should think so indeed. Why, the girl is a raving, screaming beauty!"

"I know she is pretty," said Blaisdell. "What has that to do with it?"

"What has that to do with it?" exclaimed the visitor, sitting erect. "What has there ever been in all the world that had not to do with the beauty of a woman?"

"I mean," said Blaisdell, somewhat hotly, "that the woman is blameless."

"The woman always is," said Rexford. "Sit down."

There was a surcharged silence in the room for several seconds. "The point is," said the older man for the twentieth time and quite pleasantly, "that my sainted Honoria wants to be sure her Helena will not encounter your Hermione if she brings her here. You can't blame her for that. My daughter is very interested in coming here—I think she is quite as much hit with you, my dear fellow, as you with her!" The elderly beau showed his amusement over the situation. "But just let us, on the very most punctilious lines, put the matter in a different light. Suppose we were at home, my wife and family and I, in London, and suppose you were there, too—would you invite your model, whosoever she might be, to meet my daughter?" Under the disreputable gray brows the eyes of a clever man peered forth.

"No—to answer honestly, I should not."

"Then how much less invite my daughter to meet her? Which is," he added in a louder tone and raising his hand, "precisely what you would do here. Now, whether the girl is what society calls innocent or not, she is not the person whom my daughter would naturally meet in society, is she?"

"No," said Blaisdell, though he winced.

"And you admit that my wife has a right to decide whom my daughter shall meet and whom she shall not?"

"Surely."

Rexford leaned back in the settle, and turned his glass about and about in his hand. "Then there you have it, my dear fellow. Either the invitation to my wife and my daughter stands as

you gave it or else it departs as you withdraw it."

Blaisdell chewed his lip as he looked at his visitor. "You understand that the girl is quite innocent?" he said at last.

"Oh, certainly," said Rexford.

"You do not satisfy me, Lord Rexford," said Blaisdell coldly.

The visitor put his glass down.

"God bless me, my dear fellow, are you going to be rude?"

"Not at all," said the younger man.

"I merely want you to say that you know the girl is innocent."

"Did I not?"

"You said it—in a way!"

"It's the only way I have," retorted his lordship. "I am a wicked old rogue. I have seen so much of life that I never expect ashes in a gaslog fire."

Blaisdell, for very inability to press his guest farther, stared at him. Finally he put down his own glass and passed both hands over his forehead. "What is it that you want, then?" he said.

Rexford cleared his throat. "It is just as I said," he replied. "You have invited my wife and my daughter here, and there are certain conditions that would alter their acceptance to a refusal. I take it you don't want that?"

"Certainly not," said Blaisdell.

"Then the only solution is to banish those conditions."

"Banish?"

Lord Rexford made an impatient movement of the hand. "I don't mean send the girl out of France," he said. "But at least for the time that you have Helen and her mother here, you can arrange?"

"You mean get rid of Léonie for tonight?"

"How brutally you put it! But damn it, my dear fellow, it's a situation of your own making. You must handle it now that you have created it. You really can't invite Lady Rexford and the Honorable Helena to meet your model—it really is!"

Blaisdell pushed back his chair and got up. From the wall at the left to the wall at the right he walked, his

hand clasping and smoothing the back of his head. To withdraw the invitation was impossible. Besides, he had set his heart on having Helena here in his studio that evening. Her father might chaff, but there was something about the girl's dark, thick, smooth hair and patrician face——

And as for her ladyship, he had been dined at her house time and time again when he and George were young sparks and Helen was away at school. He was deeply in her debt. Above all, the way Lord Rexford put it—he was not criticizing the girl now. He was simply stating an indubitable fact concerning Léonie's social position. She might be as good as pie and cheese, yet she could not play hostess under existing circumstances to Lord and Lady Rexford.

He had given the invitation and they had accepted it. What a change in that programme would produce goodness knew. He was rather hit with Helena! The wicked old rogue had seen it. He wanted to paint her; he wanted, on settling in London for a year or two, to be a persona grata at Rexford House—not because he was a snob, but because he loved beautiful homes and exquisite living and the gently bred man and woman. He was not giving them an advantage, these Rexfords, because he was a tuft hunter, but because he felt bound to them, mixed with them, beholden to them. Léonie was a sweet little girl, and since it was no longer a question of her honor he could in all reason cede the point. Léonie was only a peasant child, she had been his model, and if the post were not one sufficiently elevated to grant introduction to his acquaintances in the London smart set it was at least above reproach.

He took four or five turns up and down the floor, and then came to a halt before his lordship. "You must understand my position," he said. "I have aspired to be the host of your daughter and your wife, and they have accepted, imposing their own conditions. So long as those conditions do not reflect upon the character of a dear child who does me the honor to live with me, well

and good. Her social position is undeniably humble. And if she is not well born enough to meet your people, she and I must manage that between us."

His lordship rose, twisting his glass into his eyelid. "There you have it, my dear fellow," he said. "The little girl can stay in another room, and my sainted wife be none the wiser. As for me, I shall of course repeat that she does not and never did live here."

"But why?" said Blaisdell angrily.

Lord Rexford dropped his glass, it would seem, by opening his mouth.

"If the girl was ugly, Blaisdell," he said, "it might go. But you could convince no woman living—and least of all a virtuous woman!—that you and that Cleopatra-Zenobia-Venus could live under one roof as brother and sister. Mind, I am not speaking of myself! I am a worthless old debauché—as my sainted wife not infrequently reminds me. And I could be convinced of anything. No matter what my opinion may be, however—I want to say without any possibility of a later misunderstanding—either the little girl is put into a trunk or the party's off!"

Blaisdell ruffled his hair. "As you say, Lord Rexford, we men seem to have very little to do with it. Of course I cannot and do not wish to retract the invitation. And what they exact, your ladies, I must produce!"

"Precisely!" said Rexford, dusting his knees. "My dear fellow, you are the very best sort. We are ridden by these women, eh? and the only way is to stand together! George, however, has allied himself with the aliens."

"George? What do you mean?"

"May I tell you?"

"Why should you not?"

Lord Rexford leaned against the tall settle. Being a short man he could stand very comfortably with his shoulder against its stalwart side. "Did it ever occur to you that my stolid nephew George was rather interested in the little girl?"

"What, Léonie again? Certainly not."

"Ah, well, you may be right. I

don't mean that the man was in love with her or anything of that kind. But simply that he found her unusual, attractive, too good to be thrown away."

"Well, that—of course."

"Now, to be frank with you, Blaisdell, George thinks that she has been just that."

"Thrown away?"

Lord Rexford nodded, sagging more heavily at the shoulders. "He came to me yesterday afternoon and talked about it. You know he is a quaint prig about some things. And one of the things is his brother Julian."

"I don't follow you," said Blaisdell.

"Well, he didn't want Julian to find out that the girl was here, and all that sort of thing. The boy, you know, took a vast sentimental interest in her—I mean from the picture. Witness the poem he wrote about it! George rather wanted him not to be disappointed. The boy is a Galahad, upon my soul. He walks through London as the Chosen People went through the Red Sea, the waves of wickedness just draw back and he doesn't so much as wet his boots. George rather fosters the situation. However be it, that is what he had to say—that he hoped I would manage adroitly so that he should not see her. I am the lad's guardian, you know. I see now by George's having bolted off today that he meant me to do it in his absence."

"I am sorry he has gone," said Blaisdell, who was far from agreeable. "I would like to correct the impression he has received of Léonie's position here. I may say I am thoroughly disgusted with him. He, of all men, might have known!"

"Just so," said Rexford, swinging his balance to his feet again. "Well, I must be off. You expect us at what time this evening? Nine? Charming! Well, good-bye. Yes, it has turned out to be a lovely day. Good-bye, Blaisdell, good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Blaisdell heavily. He watched his guest pass daintily out the door and saw it close behind him. Then he sank limply into the settle.

He stared at the floor, he stared at the opposite wall. If it had not been for Helena, he told himself uncomfortably, he would have chuckled all other considerations to the winds. But he had begun to dream pictures about Helena, and he acknowledged even to himself that Lord Rexford was quite right in saying he was a little bit *épris*. And yet above and beyond all rose the indubitable situation—he must do as they wished on the evening of their advent. Farther than this he did not look. He would have admitted as well, had anyone charged him with it, the fact that he had no intention of foregoing the acquaintance of Helena Rexford in London. Yet just what was to become of Léonie Cabert when he went to England and later, according to his plans, to America, he did not contemplate. He was of that vast army of pleasant, generous, easy-going creatures who find the evil of today sufficient for the yesterday thereof.

He sat there on the settle—after making himself quite comfortable—staring at the wall opposite, until the door opened and Léonie came in.

She was dressed in a dull blue that made her hair flame in the twilight, and she was flushed with the stairs.

"Are you there?" she called, half-panting.

Blaisdell turned. "Yes, I am here," he said. "Where have you been?" He got up and came toward her as she stood drawing off her gloves. "Where have you been?" he repeated. "I have missed you all day."

"I went out into the country with Julian Ritchie," she said. "And he read to me a poem called the 'Endymion.'"

But Blaisdell did not answer. He had been smitten suddenly still, speechless and staring.

VII

LÉONIE, walking away and still drawing off her gloves, came upon the two glasses, eloquent of a recent visitor. "Someone has been in?" she said

absently. Her mind was full of other things.

"Lord Rexford," said Blaisdell.

"Oh," she said. Then, "You like him?"

"I can't honestly say that I do."

She was far more positive. "I hate him. There is something horrid about him, like an animal who eats flies."

"Good Lord!"

She laughed, dropping down into the settle. "Oh, oh, I have been so happy today. Did you ever read the 'Endymion'?"

"Why, yes," he said. He looked at her curiously. "What did you make of it?"

"Well, Julian did not——"

"Julian! You call him Julian?"

"Why not?"

"I don't know," said Blaisdell rather feebly. "It seemed rather familiar on a short acquaintance."

"I have called him Julian for months," she smiled.

"Have you?" he said dully. "Go on."

"Go on about what? Oh, the 'Endymion'—well, Julian did not read it all. But it was gloriously beautiful. He has a charming voice—it has such a fascinating way of going up and down. I am afraid I wasn't always paying attention to what it all meant, but the words were so pretty—like butterflies in the sunshine."

"When did you meet him?"

"For the first time? Last night. He came in here and you had all gone to the theatre."

"He knew we were at the theatre!"

Léonie nodded, somewhat awkwardly, as her hands were lifted and she was unpinning her hat. "He did—he said so."

"But then he came to see you?"

"He did not know I was here. Your fine friends had not seen fit to mention me." She was not heroic, this little girl, and the omission still rankled. "He came, he said, because he knew I must have been here once. I liked his doing it."

"And he stayed and talked to you last evening?"

"Oh, yes, we had a wonderful time. You see, we have thought about each other so much—it made it all so different."

He glanced at her sharply. "Different?"

"Different from everything that has ever been before."

Blaisdell turned away and walked aimlessly to his smoking-stand. Mechanically he opened the humidor and took out a cigar. Different! And she was beautiful—he was like one of the Greeks reborn—they were young—"Great Cæsar's ghost!" he said to himself.

She stood a moment pushing the long pins into her hat. Then as he turned with the cigar he did not want, she lifted her head and faced him. "I want to have a talk with you," she said—"some time when you will. There are things that have puzzled me. I would be glad to have them explained."

"Fire away now, then," he said, although he did not feel as confident as his voice might sound. He had had some experience with trying to explain things to her!

She put down her hat and came nearer to him, in a frank, thoughtful manner. "I don't know quite where to begin," she said.

Blaisdell treated it debonairly, as he lighted his cigar. "If you had ever read 'Alice in Wonderland'—and I think it would be better for you than the 'Endymion'—you would recognize my authority when I say, 'begin at the beginning.'"

"The beginning," she said slowly, "is rather far back. I don't know that I should recognize it if I saw it! I don't know when I first became conscious of it. But there is a difference between life here and life at home in Châtillon."

"Yes?" said Blaisdell.

"Yes," she echoed gravely. "Do you know what it is? I don't. I have thought about it and thought about it. I am haunted by a specter—it appears in the most unexpected places, at the most unheralded times. It gives no

warning and it never fully materializes. I become aware of its presence only by a certain chill that passes over me. It manifests itself under the most unlikely conditions. I shall have forgotten all about it—and then comes that pause, that chill, that sense to remind me of its existence. If somebody were dead, and everyone was trying to keep me in ignorance of the fact, I could not feel more acutely the unnatural strain of some of our daily conversations. I have felt it for a long time. I am aware of it when the concierge comes in; I feel it when you have visitors. Outwardly there is nothing I can put my finger upon. Inwardly there is a gap that a whole hand would not fill. Out in the street I felt it. I hear things that seem to speak of a different life. I see situations that I do not understand. Are you keeping me in the dark about something? And if you are, by what right do you do it? Am I not a human creature like yourselves? And why should I not know what you know?"

"You ask ten thousand questions!" he demurred. His throat felt dry and his heart ached.

"Give me ten thousand answers, then!" she said.

The day had become crowded with horrors for him. He felt like a creature entrapped in a net. He could strike out in all directions, but never become free. With her sweet face and her pure eyes she looked for his response.

"What is it you want to know?" he said.

"That which you know I do not know," she replied keenly.

"And what do you think that is?"

She made a despairing movement. "If I could tell you that, I should not need to come to you. But there is something. I can feel it all about me. I almost come upon it ten times a day. And then it eludes me."

He continued to look at her. "You have been imagining things," he said at last.

"No, I have not," she said. "I will give you an example. George

Ritchie did not want me to know his brother."

Blaisdell fairly jumped. "How do you know that?"

"For another thing, Lord Rexford thought there was no apology due me if he made me uncomfortable."

"But you learn amazingly fast!" he involuntarily said.

"Learn? Only, then, because I am taught. Is it only that they think I am not well-born enough for them?"

He seemed struck by the question, but did not answer. "Because if that is all, we are not bad folk, you know. My grandfather lived here in Paris and was a man comfortably well-to-do and his father, too. We are not gutter people. We have always had our army men. It is not a bad record."

"English people—" he began and suddenly paused. It had come to him suddenly that he had agreed to obtain her absence from the studio that very night. Was not this the very best moment to approach it? Bad as it was, it was better than telling her the truth.

"English people," he repeated, "are very peculiar. The Rexford family goes back to Arthur of the Round Table, I verily believe. At any rate, they are almost absurdly exclusive. And their position is such that no one questions them."

"What does 'exclusive' mean?"

"Why, that they don't like to meet new people," he floundered. He turned away miserably, feeling as if he had struck a child.

"Am I a new person?"

"New to them," he said. He put his hands into his pockets and recognized a desire to kick the chair nearest him. He had imagined it was going to be hard to do this thing. He had wondered how in the world he was to make the opportunity. But here she had suddenly bared her breast to him and invited the blow.

She was quite silent for a moment. Then she said: "So they don't care to know me? Was that what Lord Rexford came back to say?"

He found no words to answer her.

A ready lying denial had sprung to his lips to spare her pain. But he realized how soon he would have to forswear his own words.

The girl gathered up her outdoor things mechanically. "Well," she said, "there is one good thing about it. They don't have to know me, do they?" She was deeply pained and most of all it would seem with his having allowed the hurt to reach her. She looked at him as she crossed the room to the stair with some resentment in her lovely face. Blaisdell was standing in obvious misery. "I think," she added softly, coming to a halt, "that you might have spared me this. I don't see just why you had to tell me that your fine people did not want to know me. I was not likely to go to see them, was I? And such great ladies would scarcely come to such a place as this."

"But they are coming!" said Blaisdell. "Tonight—I asked them to come."

She lost a little color as she stared at him. "I am afraid I don't understand," she said blankly. "You asked them to come here knowing that they did not want to know me?" She caught her breath. "Oh, no, I see. You did not know it then. It was about me that Lord Rexford came to see you. Well, what did you decide? Is the party to be abandoned? No—or you would have spared me this. They are coming here, tonight. And what about me? Am I to stand here to be treated unkindly, or am I to hide in my little room as if I had done something to be ashamed of, while you and your friends amuse yourselves?" Her breath was rather short suddenly, and the color that had left her cheeks had evidently but departed on a recruiting errand and now returned with reinforcements.

He could not help a groan. "Oh, when you say 'amuse yourselves'!"

Her hands clutched at the garments she carried. "Then you do want me to hide in my room?" she said. Her voice had an odd, raucous note that was quite new. "If you and Lord Rexford have talked this all over and decided that I should not be present at the party, why don't you tell me so?"

"Because I can't bear it!" he flung out desperately. "Do you suppose I enjoy hurting you, Léonie? Have I ever once since the first day I saw you been unkind to you? Don't you see that I have no choice in the matter?"

"So long as you can do it, I don't see that you deserve any particular credit for not being able to say it!" she returned. "You always have been good to me, but you can't purchase that way the right to be bad to me now." Her voice broke childishly, but she drew herself up again in her new dignity. "If you wish me to remain in my room tonight during your party, will you please say so?"

"Léonie!" he cried.

It did not move her. Still with her cheeks flaming and her eyes bright, looking more beautiful than he had ever seen her look in all his life, she stood facing him. "Will you please say so?" she repeated.

His attitude broke into one of despairing assent. "Very well, I say so," he replied. "I suppose I can't expect it now, but I know that some day you will understand how it grieves me to hurt you."

"No, as you say," she echoed in a hard tone, "you can't expect me to feel it very keenly just now."

He had perforce to stare at her. "I don't know you in this mood," he said. Did women learn the art of sarcasm from the air they breathed? Little ignorant Léonie—who stood facing him with such an air of outraged dignity—had she this unholly subconscious knowledge in her soul as a birthright?

Her brilliant eyes narrowed as she looked at him. "There is something else you have to tell me?" she said half positively, half in question. Then she replied to the interrogation in his face. "Because I feel it here," she said, as with her old sweet gesture of innocent effort of expression, she laid her hand upon her breast, "that there is more to it than you have told me. I feel, just as I have felt in other things, that you are keeping something back. You are hiding a part of the truth."

He was silent and she went on: "If

you are, from any sense of that delicate wish to spare me pain, pray do not. You have hurt me as deeply as I can imagine it possible, and now it is just the time to let me have it all. If you know of anything more than what you have told me that is likely to come up as this has done, and wound me again in the future, you are more than unkind in keeping it from me. Let me have it all now, when I can suffer no more than I do."

"There is nothing more," he said. He turned away and sat down in the great chair and took his head between his hands. He could not remember ever to have been so miserable. In a profound silence the girl went on up the stairs and into her little room. She closed the door between them.

VIII

THE person of Marceau was very French and the art of Marceau was very French, and both were detailed to furnish forth the feast with which Blaisdell had determined to regale his little party. In spite of the abysmal gloom into which he had been cast by the affair of the afternoon, he could not help but take a sordid and intense interest in the arrangement of the supper-table, and he hovered about in the studio quite as nervously as if the greatest pleasure were to be his. A number of palms and such befoggléments had filled in the bare places, and the round table with its staring white cloth and sparkle of metal and glass made a bright spot in the dingy place.

Marceau and his assistant hurried about perfecting all details, and the crisp patter of their argot made the air snap with anticipation. Here a plate, there a fork!—But look, animal, at the galantine!—Take care of that moussel!—What in the name of a name are you doing with those *petits fours*?—Camel, where is the salad?

Preparation, skilful though rapid, bungled though competent, went on madly, and Marceau kept repeating under his breath, as though to spur his

waning forces to greater achievement. "A milord and a milady—sacred blue, what a pity I had not saved the candy angel from last Noël!"

Eloquent, upon the balcony, showed the closed door of Léonie's room.

Five or six times had Blaisdell gone up those stairs, to come to a miserable pause at the top. He had nothing that he could say to her, and yet he wanted very fervently to say something. It was all so still in there—he wondered what she was doing. The poor child was hurt and he had hurt her, and he could do nothing to remedy the matter. So he came down the stairs as many times as he went up, and he now stood watching the final preparations, wondering what on earth he was going to do with her in the end. For there was more than just this one evening to consider. Down there in Châtillon it had all seemed plain and easy sailing, and since their coming to Paris everything had gone smoothly, her absolute innocence of the appearance of evil was taken for a mere frank acceptance of her left-handed position, and nobody troubled her. "*Ille vivaient ensemble, bon!*"—and that was all there was to it—with such a difference!—both in her mind and that of the neighbors.

But Blaisdell occupied the uncomfortable position of a Colossus in the matter. And he saw now very plainly that while innocence could thrive in the Latin Quarter and not be spat upon, it could in no wise expect to receive such treatment from Hanover Square. Both places might look upon the situation as something that it quite was not, but one would tolerate it even then and the other would not.

He was frank enough with himself now to admit that Léonie had not been banished from the affair because of her bourgeois birth. That had been a subterfuge with which he had eased his conscience and Rexford had softened his request. Blaisdell knew, of course, that Rexford had not been convinced of the girl's innocence, but he laid that failure partly to the old rascal's habit of mind.

Nevertheless it was, of course, a good deal for anybody to believe—even George, it would seem, having a healthy mind and knowing them both well, had come to a disturbing conclusion on the matter.

Well! He straightened his shoulders. Let him carry it through tonight, protect her from suspicion in the minds of these women, and then he would undertake to clear her name of any stain, setting her right before the men of the family, and then——

Then something. Oh, yes, decidedly something. But heaven only knew what. The child's utter lack of family connection and of friends—thanks to her mother's rigid upbringing—made the question one of a rare blankness. He had brought her away from the Aosta rather than see her enter a convent. The old fat priest and he had had high words on the subject! Yet he could not think, not, at least, at the moment, of any other place for her. She could not be a servant, she was too beautiful, too innocent, too lonely to be unprotected even if he should provide the money for her maintenance, and she could not stay with him.

It was a problem for a man with a clear mind, and here were galantines, pâtés, and all that sort of thing to distract him. Yes—he went back to his old conclusion—just let him manage for tonight, and then he would have a chance to think. He would not invite the ladies of the Rexford party there again, and he would say nothing to Léonie until the time came for him to go to England. By that time something surely would have suggested itself.

The grave complication of the situation was young Julian. Undoubtedly the boy did not share the belief of the others in Léonie's disgrace, undoubtedly if he came he would mention her. It was to be forfended at any cost. And then—and then that wonderful something would take care of it all. He turned his face away from the picture of Léonie and Julian reading "Endymion" from one page in the shattered sunshine underneath the leaves of a

cradling tree. They were both so young and so beautiful!

"Does monsieur wish one of us to remain?" asked Marceau, after his last glance at the beloved table.

"Good heavens, no!" said Blaisdell. "The concierge is coming in later to put things away. Push the table a little more to one side, and get out."

Marceau smiled and bowed. The table was pushed aside, and the men departed. Blaisdell went over to the fantastic creation of artificiality, and looked down at it. As his glance wandered over its many delicacies it suddenly occurred to him that he had not dined, and with that thought came another that made an icy grip of contrition close upon his heart—neither had Léonie! Catching up a plate, he made an attack upon the *pâté* and the salad, and poised at the side a dainty pile of pretty sandwiches. Then setting this down, he caught up a bottle of tisane from the ice pail, and struggled fiercely with its corkage. "I am a fool," he said angrily. "I am a black-guard. The child is starved, and feels that I have forgotten her. How in the name of all that is reasonable can a man have such harmless intentions as I have and create so much misery?"

A glass of the wine foamed up to the rim of the goblet he held, and he set down the bottle. Then with the champagne in one hand and the plate of good things in the other he hurried up the stairs. "Léonie!" he called. "Léonie!"

After several moments during which his heart beat as if he had been running for a mile in soft sand, her door opened. She stood there across the threshold, dressed in her nightshift, plain, straight and unbecoming as it was. Her eyes were red and swollen, her cheeks were white. Her hair was dragged back tightly into a braid. She was ugly. She was the little Léonie of long ago. In his mind's eye he saw the picture of her as she stooped and kissed the cord of the priest's robe.

"You haven't had anything to eat," he blundered, pushing the plate toward her.

"I am not hungry," she replied plainly. The light behind her shone through the serviceable material of her gown, exposing her straight, childish shadow.

"But you must have something," he said.

"I could not eat!" she returned, somewhat emphatically.

"Please!" he said. His eyes were wistful with his chagrin. "It was stupid of me to forget our dinner—I was so occupied with suffering over this abominable situation. It would cut me to the heart!"

"It would cut you to the heart!" she repeated. "Upon my soul, I believe it would grieve you more to keep me from my dinner than to starve my whole soul and life. What do I want with things to eat—to eat? Good God!" She had suddenly burst into flame and she turned now as a fire might in a gust of wind, and caught up Julian Ritchie's photograph as if her very touch would consume it. "You offer me something to eat!" she said.

It was amazing, the effect of the thing. The very crudity of the figure of the girl, the symbolic yearning of her attitude, the blazing disdain of all her being for his fleshly succor, were eloquent. He was not a man of the church, yet, somehow, there came into his mind the words, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst—" In her whole bearing she exemplified the craving for those things he had never given her, that miraculous manna which she had tasted for the first time so recently.

He returned down the stairs, feeling uncomfortably aware of the plate and the glass. It was an awkward situation, utterly bereft of all suggestion of the heroic that might have made it endurable. He set down the plate and stared at it. The tisane he drank, and ate one of the sandwiches. He was very miserable.

Then the sound of voices sounded on the stairway, and a moment later came a rap at the door. He swallowed the remaining crumbs of bread, gave a pull to his coat, and went to open the door

for his guests. Lord Rexford was in the van, dapper, correct and always hopeful of double entendre which cheers while it does not inebriate. Behind him loomed the rather massive beauty of his wife; hidden behind her, except for her beauteous head which overtopped them both, was Helena, and for the last of them came Julian. He looked for George, but saw that he was not there.

"Here is the family!" cried Rexford debonairly, entering. His sharp little eyes, which needed a monocle no more than a cat needs two tails, galloped around the room and reported all safe. There was no sign of any miscreant damsel anywhere. "Come in, my dear," said Lord Rexford, in token of his appreciation.

Lady Rexford was rather fat and decidedly heavy. She had red arms, which she saw fit to bare, and a ruddy, strong bosom that would never have suggested a décolleté gown to anyone except a British matron. She wore a gown of greenish-blue velvet and her jewels were masses of garnets.

Helena survived the danger of disfiguration by being of an age when colors and jewels were considered unpardonable, and her white silk and gardenias were quite soothing to the human eye after the wounds of the garnets and plush. Lady Rexford was rubicund and talkative in contradistinction to Julian Ritchie, who was pale and silent.

"Where is George?" said Blaisdell.

"So far as I know, he and his Creator are the sole guardians of that secret—though one never can tell!" replied Rexford, getting out of his coat. "Honor, my dear, let me help you." He ignored the glaring reproof of her eye which took note of his scandalous remark, and stepping behind her lifted her cloak from her fat shoulders. Blaisdell had taken Helena's wrap, and as she moved forward into the great room, looking about her with interest, he found an opportunity to step nearer to Julian Ritchie.

"Do not speak of Léonie, if you please," he said in a sharp undertone.

Julian stared a moment, stripping off his gloves. Then, very quietly, he replied, "You are my host."

The remark had not a soothing effect. Blaisdell flushed and suddenly felt himself to be injured and misunderstood. He laid down Helena's white cloak upon Julian's coat. "We can talk of it another time," he said.

"If you please," said Julian, with an insistent emphasis.

Blaisdell frowned. "You do not need to speak so, my dear boy," he said shortly.

"I am glad to hear it," returned Julian imperturbably.

The other turned away and joined the Rexfords. Her ladyship, asthmatic and tightly laced, sat breathing audibly in the big settle, perched forward miserably on the edge. The luxury of comfort was hers only for a few brief hours during the twenty-four, a self-imposed martyrdom that has its parallel only in fanaticism. Helena already had her hands full of sketches, bending over a portfolio in a rack, and was softly chattering of her pleasure and admiration.

Lord Rexford was aimlessly wandering about, smoking a cigarette and staring at everything.

"This is a charming studio, Mr. Blaisdell," said her ladyship, with a wheeze. He had always associated asthma with fat, deaf, good-natured people, and it had rather disconcerted him to find the ailment in this hard-featured, sharp, stony woman, giving the effect of the petulant breathing of a nervous warhorse.

"I call it a barn," said Blaisdell. "Now that you are actually in it, I don't see how I ever had the effrontery to ask you to come here. What horrors are you laying bare, Miss Rexford?"

"Nothing horrid. Only things that are charming," replied the girl. She was so beautiful in his eyes, and he so adored the slow smile of her, that he could have sworn she had said something clever.

He went toward her, and seeing what she held was soon deep in ex-

planations. This was a bit of Milan Cathedral—that was Desdemona's balcony—here he had tried to catch the look of the white sea and white sky at Naples, and had not succeeded, as indeed who could? Had she ever been to Bretagne? It was a horrible place—he had done these other studies there.

Lord Rexford meanwhile in rambling about had come upon just those studies that Blaisdell, in appreciation of the prejudices of her ladyship, had put away. And so absorbed did he become in one—standing with his back to the room and his left hand holding the foregoing paintings, as a man might lean upon a cane, that he did not hear his wife coming up behind him, albeit her tread was none of the softest.

"Kenneth!" she cried in shocked rebuke, peering over his shoulder.

"My dear?" said Rexford guiltily.

"Kenneth, how can you?"

"I was admiring her wrist," said his lordship, swinging another sketch before the offending sight. "It was so precisely like your own."

"Really—" murmured she, discomfited. It was evident that Kenneth, Lord Rexford, had learned his lesson.

He dropped the affair entire and turned, smiling, to the table. "And men sit down to that nourishment which is called supper," he said, "but women prefer to stand around or perch about on insufficient roostings and peck lightly and with a half interest at those things to which one should give one's whole attention."

"I beg your pardon!" said Blaisdell, turning about. "I am afraid I have been rude. We painters are so susceptible to flattery. A little interest in our work reduces us to mere brutality. Can't I get you a glass of wine, Lady Rexford?" He was all alert at the mere thought of his past remissness and began savagely to unfasten the cork of a cooling bottle. Lady Rexford's glacial tones chilled him in the midst of this hospitable action.

"Thank you, I never touch it," she said.

It is a simple matter one way or the other, but it throws an amazing weight into the wrong side of the scale of good-fellowship. Blaisdell's hand actually faltered—then he went miserably on with his labors.

"That is where you are very short-sighted," said Rexford pleasantly. "Your lorgnettes don't seem to do you the slightest good."

She ignored it—though she glared at it. And Blaisdell filled such glasses as were not to be hers. Rexford himself lifted two of them. "You've ordered these suppers before this, eh?" he whispered, laughing, as he turned from his host to his ward. "Here, Julian," he said, "have a glass of wine. You look white."

"Kenneth!" said Lady Rexford.

"My dear, I am the boy's guardian. And I know what is best for him." He held out the brimming flower glass toward Julian.

But it was not accepted. "Thank you very much—I don't care for it," said the young fellow youngly.

Blaisdell, who was passing him at the moment, watchfully bearing two goblets of tisane, one for himself and one for Helena, paused for an instant. "Are you not going to break bread with us?" he said.

Their eyes met squarely. "No," said Julian Ritchie quietly.

Rexford raised his glass. "Here is to our host," he said. But Blaisdell demurred. "That leaves only Miss Rexford and yourself to drink it—let us make the toast to ourselves, all of us."

As the three of them drank to this, her ladyship turned to Julian. "I am glad to see that you follow my example," she said.

"You can lead a woman to the altar," said Lord Rexford, "but you cannot make her drink."

"But you may drink to her," said Blaisdell. "I give you Lady Rexford."

There was little of enthusiasm in the toast, but Rexford capped it with a better. "I give you Helena," he said.

Even Julian caught up a glass and filled it for that. "And since we are

toasting beautiful women—" he said boyishly, "may I not give you a toast of my own?" He lifted his goblet—high. "I give you Joan of Arc, the most wonderful woman that ever lived in flesh or canvas. I give you the best woman that was ever cruelly used by a brutal world. I give you the crown of woman's courage, beauty and perfection—Joan of Arc."

They drank to the toast, Julian and Blaisdell with their eyes on one another. Helena sipped her champagne daintily. "I have always wanted to ask you," she said, "where you got the woman to pose for that."

"Helena!" said Lady Rexford.

"Oh, mother, surely there can be no harm in that," returned the girl.

"But none whatever," said Blaisdell. "She was a young girl in Châtillon. I was at my wits' end—for there wasn't a woman's face in all Paris with even a vestige of innocent purity left.

"Mr. Blaisdell!" said her ladyship.

"Oh, believe me, I am not exaggerating," he returned. "The very children in the streets, ignorant as they are, are stamped with the curse of the city. They assume a wisdom, if they have it not. I wanted a face of beauty, and they are the first that learn."

"Who teaches them?" said Julian Ritchie.

"Their own mothers sometimes," replied Rexford.

But his wife bridled again. "My dear, please to remember that your daughter is present."

"Oh, my dear, why drag me in?" said Helena softly.

"But at any rate you found the face you wanted?" insisted Julian.

"Yes. Just when my last drop of ambition was oozing out of my fingertips I passed a stupid little cabin of a house, and there she was, with the light that never shone on land or sea falling upon her face."

"It must have seemed fairly unreal," said Helena softly.

"And then?" said her ladyship.

"Then—nothing. I managed to get her to pose for me. And the picture made me."

"*Et voilà!*" said Rexford.

"Exactly," said Blaisdell.

"Exactly," said Julian.

Lady Rexford, who had been watching her husband prepare a plate of dainties and delicacies for her, now took it from him with a fat wheeze. She turned to Blaisdell with an air of official investigation. "Do you find, among the women who pose for the better class of pictures—I mean the draped——?"

"Honoria!" said her husband in a deft imitation of her own manner.

"Do you find them fairly intelligent?"

"Oh, yes," said Blaisdell.

"With average morality?"

"Honoria, our daughter!" said Rexford, choking himself with pâté and amusement.

Blaisdell was fain to turn the subject into other channels. "But just what is average morality?" he said. Visions of all the little creatures who had peddled their shivering beauty to his brush came before him and nudged him to beg the question. "They are not very well educated, of course, and their morality has not been, so to speak, cultivated. It is no fault of their own."

"Not their fault?" retorted Lady Rexford, with a prodigious snort. "You would dispose of human responsibility? Whose fault is it, then? Are they not able to choose for themselves?"

"Helena," said Lord Rexford, "this is no place for us. When moral people get to moralizing it is usually very indecent. Please get out of earshot and come over here and share this enormous marron with me."

"My dear Kenneth," retorted his wife, overhearing, "if earnest, respectable people would oftener inquire into matters of doubtful virtue, vice would be less triumphant in the world." She turned on Blaisdell with a suddenness.

"Now your model for the Joan of Arc," she said.

Blaisdell fairly jumped. "Why, she is not to be mentioned in any such connection," he said hurriedly.

"Yet she has sat for you in partially undraped poses," she returned.

"Well, never more than that," said

Blaisdell. "And even if she had—surely the nude is the most unconsciously innocent thing in life! The Maker's most superb creation."

"Not," said her ladyship, with her mouth full of salad, "not when coquettishly draped."

Rexford put his arm through Helena's and drew her yet farther away.

"Your mother's virtue is getting rampant," he said. "My dear, you object to the nude—you object to the draped. What under heaven don't you object to?" He poured some wine into his glass.

"I object to the undraping, of course, Kenneth," said his wife, with as much dignity as she could assume with a well-laden fork poised before her lips.

"Yet," said Rexford—sometimes he could not help it—"you wear a low-necked gown."

"Azzverdifft," said her ladyship. And it was.

"I am sure," said Rexford, coming toward her and holding out a brimming glass of tisane, "if you would take this you would find things not so bad after all. Come—it will make you look on life more leniently."

But she was not to be quieted. "I do not wish to look on life leniently!" she declared, bridling like a horse under a taut snaffle. "Let us face every issue with unfaltering standards. You cannot tell me, Mr. Blaisdell, that women can pose like that and be virtuous and innocent!"

Rexford sat down beside her and drank the wine himself. "Gad!" he said pleasantly, "you virtuous women know an amazing lot!"

"You cannot assert," she went on—occasionally in England she spoke on the platform for the good of the country—"that a woman of fine sensibilities, a woman of pure mind, could so atrociously offend her natural modesty, the modesty that God gave her?"

Blaisdell smiled uncomfortably. "Do let us be exact," he said. "It was the serpent, you know. In the beginning they were naked and unashamed." If he hoped so pleasantly to end the matter, he was disappointed.

Her ladyship paid no attention to his words, but waxed eloquent. Her husband sat beside her, his left foot tucked beneath his right knee, and a general air of whimsical interest in his face as he watched her. Helena was manifestly uncomfortable—for some unexplained reason she did not want mama to make herself ridiculous before Mr. Blaisdell. With other people it did not matter. She fidgeted about, casting surreptitious glances into his face. Julian Ritchie had gradually drawn nearer to Blaisdell—his arms were lightly crossed and his fingers thrummed on his sleeve, but his eyes were intent upon his host.

"You cannot tell me," said Lady Rexford, getting redder than ever with her conviction, "that a woman can degrade herself so without dulling the edge of her conscience. You say these women who pose can be virtuous and innocent. It is impossible. Take the case the other way—virtuous and innocent women, could they be persuaded to pose?"

"Pose and expose!" said her husband, and slapped the ankle he held prisoner. "Funny I never thought of that before."

"Any pure-minded woman or girl, could she do a thing like that?" She made a sweeping gesture toward the sketches that Blaisdell had turned toward the wall in that inconspicuous corner where Rexford had been caught by the present orator ogling a lady's wrist. "Do you suppose I——?"

Lord Rexford jumped. "Good God, Honoria," he cried, "there are limits which even a virtuous woman can surpass."

She withered him with a look. "I was about to say, do you suppose I would believe in the innocence of any such woman if you protested it for centuries? Certainly not!"

"Of course not, my dear," said Rexford soothingly, as he put his eyeglass in with a horrible grimace as if it hurt him. "Far be it from any daughter of Britannia to go to any such lengths. You have a corner in virtue, you women, and you defy any-

one in any other walk of life to produce a single share of the stock. What a queer thing your religion must be, eh? Now do, for heaven's sake, let's talk of something else."

He rose petulantly, but Julian's voice stayed him. The boy had turned to Blaisdell. "You are going to defend her, of course, against this baseless attack?" he said quietly. His long, well-shaped fingers continued to drum lightly upon his arms. "My aunt has been, after the strange privilege of women, defaming the character of the girl who posed for your Joan of Arc. You are not going to let it rest there?"

"Julian, for the love of the king! It has been bad enough already! I thought we came to enjoy ourselves."

"Julian, remember Helena," said Lady Rexford, who used her daughter as a means to prevent others from having their say, though it in no wise deterred her from speaking her most outright mind.

"Oh, yes, Helena!" said Julian. "And if we had heard one slighting word spoken of her, what a battle would be waged all about us."

"Upon my soul, Julian, I hope so!" said his guardian flatly.

"But given a girl without birth, position or independence, a girl of all others open to unjust censure, and not a hand is raised for silence."

"Julian," said Lady Rexford, "that is enough."

"I am sorry, Aunt Honoria, but it is not enough. I am waiting to hear Mr. Blaisdell say that your unworthy slanders of this girl are unjustified. And I hope he will say it very quickly."

"You little tiger pup!" said his lordship, highly amused.

"My dear Mr. Ritchie," said Blaisdell quietly, "I did not for a moment understand that your aunt's sweeping generalities included Miss Cabert. I so positively know the girl to be absolutely innocent not only of evil but of the very knowledge of it that it never occurred to me she was in need of defense. I am quite sure," he added, turning toward the strenuous lady

creaking in her bluish-green velvet and heaving beneath her garnet ornaments, "that you did not mean to include Miss Cabert, did you? You believe me when I tell you the little girl is as good as any woman that ever breathed?"

Her ladyship snorted. "It is no use," she said. "I haven't lived in the world for forty years——"

"Gad, how you virtuous women will lie about your ages!" interjected Rexford in an undertone.

"—without having learned the value of men's protestations!" finished the lady, and glared at her husband. "You could go on protesting until doomsday, Mr. Blaisdell, that the girl was as innocent as new corn, that she had been chaperoned here by six middle-aged aunts and a mother, that she had never been alone with you or anyone else in all her life—and in the face of that evidence"—she repeated her former gesture toward the hapless sketch—"I should not believe you!"

"You shall believe him!" cried Julian. "Tell her again and again that she is blameless."

"It is quite true, indeed, Lady Rexford," said Blaisdell. "You are doing her a great wrong, on my honor you are. Lots of girls pose against whom there is not a breath of scandal. Nobody thinks anything of it, the circumstances are irreproachable—everything is quite utterly proper, I assure you. And Miss Cabert is one of the most blameless women living, I give you my word!"

There was a short pause after this impassioned if somewhat floundering defense. And then the unexpected and the awful came to pass.

Léonie's door on the balcony opened and she came out. She was dressed in a gown of rich golden brocade, the fanciful, semi-medieval thing that best suited her refulgent beauty. All traces of her recent outbreak were gone. She was calm, dignified and of an inexpressible loveliness. All golden and glorious, she came out into that silence. Then slowly she started to descend the stairs.

On the movement, Blaisdell turned

toward her miserably. "Oh, what are you doing, my child!" he said softly.

She misunderstood his words. "What am I doing here?" she said as if echoing him. Her delicious voice sounded clearly in that breathless hush. She looked at him wonderingly. "Why, I live here, don't I?" she said.

IX

THE change had come about in that little room all unsuspected by those below who knew that she was there. If the sounds that came up to her had been noisy, gay, merry sounds, it is probable she would not have been moved by them. But there came to her ears only the low, soft murmur of voices, a gently bred sound with which she was quite familiar—so familiar, indeed, that her banishment seemed more than ever unjust and unendurable. She had begun by bathing her face and rearranging her hair, merely that she might see herself in the glass and wonder wherein she compared so ill with the privileged women down there. Then little by little she had arrayed herself in her daintiest garb, and the final metamorphosis had come with the donning of the golden gown. For all the innocence of the girl could not protect her from the knowledge that she was beautiful. She had too keen a delight in loveliness not to appreciate it wherever she saw it, in her own mirror or elsewhere. What was true of her was that her beauty and her knowledge of it left her straightforward soul unchanged. She was too ignorant to understand the power and the penalty of such a face. But it had remained for a childish resentment of an ungracious act to cloud her clear sight with a blindness. Without any more coherent idea than that she had been told to stay in her room, and that she now refused longer to be obedient, that she had been told she was not good enough to meet these people and that she now saw herself to be quite equal to meeting any human being that moved in whatever pomp and glory on

the kind of the same world with her, that she had been injured and now would injure—she, almost before she was herself aware of the act, opened the door of her little room and sallied forth.

The idea that her presence in the house had been kept a secret from the women of the party had never occurred to her. Indeed, she had so little experience with either men or women that she would not have understood the distinction had she known of it.

After the first paralysis of the girl's appearance and the radiance of her amazing golden person had passed, Lady Rexford had risen, "terrible as an army with banners," and swept her daughter with her from the room. The air had been full of beseeching and infuriated utterances, of strange looks and chaotic departure. Léonie had not wholly understood, but she had been sorry, in a quick, childish way, and had wished herself with all her heart back in her little room.

Blaisdell had caught Lord Rexford at the door as he followed in the wake of his wife as a dingy is drawn after a yacht under full sail. "I must come over to the hotel at once," he had said, "I must explain and apologize. Tell her ladyship—beg her, implore her for me not to go to her rooms. I won't be ten seconds behind you." He had caught up his hat and coat as he spoke.

Rexford had shaken his head and then laughed. "Upon my soul, I half admire the girl for her spirit," he had said. "Come if you will—I'll do my best to help smooth it over. Come, Julian! I tell you what, Blaisdell, you can apologize if you choose, but when it comes to explaining! Damn it, man. The girl's too beautiful!"

Léonie, her hands clasped together and her eyes brimming with tears, stood in the middle of the room. Julian Ritchie was going toward her when his uncle called to him. "I am not going home," he said to her, although she was paying no attention to him. "I am going to wait outside. If you want me, I am there. No matter what it is that you want, you are to

come to me for it. I will stay there all night long. And tomorrow I am coming back here to see you. You cannot stay here, you know. We must go away."

She stared at him as if she wondered who he was. "Why did they run away from me?" she said. "I don't understand."

"Of course you don't," he said. "But I do, and you must let me take care of it all. Remember I shall be waiting—yes, I am coming." He took her hand and kissed it and followed the others from the room. The girl was left standing alone.

It had all happened so suddenly that she felt faint and dazed. The room, one moment before so comfortably filled with the sound of voices, was painfully still. The partly disordered supper-table, with its ample provision for half-a-dozen guests, seemed remarkably out of place and proportion. In her golden gown she stood looking on the desolation she had made, and then inevitably she collapsed into the great settle and shrank there in a corner like a child that had lost its way.

Uncounted, unnoticed, the minutes dripped their sands away, and she sat there alone, almost crouching, stricken by bewilderment and misery. An unjustly beaten animal has no better understanding of its suffering than she of her own grief. Huddled in the settle like a beggar, she sat and trembled.

What had she done? What was it all about? Beyond peradventure she had done something terrible, something more terrible than she had even dreamed.

A quarter of an hour later, when matters were quite unchanged, she heard a door open. A hope that it was Blaisdell brought her to her feet. She wanted to have this thing explained. But it was the little door under the stairs, and the head that craned itself around the edge thereof was that of the concierge.

"Am I too early, then, mademoiselle? My husband thought he heard them go away. I am dropping with fatigue."

"No, come in. What is it?" She rose mechanically as the woman entered—such a hard, tight little woman, with a face like a sharp-witted pig.

"Monsieur arranged with me that I should come up and clear the things away. But, my God, they have eaten nothing!"

She clasped her hard hands in open dismay and secret delight. "A whole ice untouched and melting away! And all that salad. A truffled pâté—my God, my God!" She turned her shrew eyes on the girl. "Monsieur said I was to remove everything, but perhaps since there is so much——"

"No, no—take it," said Léonie wearily, moving away.

Trembling with delight the woman began her labor, noisily stacking dishes, and appraising the viands with gluttonous eyes. There was enough there to give a party of their own—and such a party. Pâtés by Marceau—her best friends would be wild with jealousy. But why on earth had monsieur's guests left so much? Were they so well fed, then? And to leave at such an hour—why, she had counted on their being here until long after midnight. She had hardly believed her husband when he said he had seen them leave, and had crept up the stairs to listen at the door and be convinced by the silence that he was right. As she put the salad from the plates back in the bowl—for what people did not know would not hurt them—she looked at the girl again watchfully. There was a dejection about her, for all the glow of her golden hair and her golden gown, as she moved miserably about the deserted room. A suspicion like a ray of light from the crack of a door penetrated the darkness of Madame Hanniet's wonderment. Her hard, tight little brows went up, the tip of her pig nose came down.

"The guests went early, mademoiselle," she said.

Léonie nodded without speaking.

"I hope there was nothing the matter, nothing disagreeable to end the little party?"

The girl turned and looked at her.

Madame Hanniet shrugged her shoulders as she put a cover over the galantine. "My husband said they looked like fine people—mother and daughter. It surprised him. He thought perhaps they had gone away angry." She invented this glibly enough, and shook her head.

"Why should they go away angry?" asked Léonie. She came a step or two toward the concierge slowly. Perhaps at last she was going to find out!

"*Eh b'en sapristi!*" said Madame Hanniet with a little laugh. "*Des femmes honnêtes!*" She gave a glance of unmistakable comparison at the girl in the golden gown.

"What do you mean?" said Léonie. "Am I not honorable? What have I ever done that was dishonorable?"

The question coming no less from the wide blue eyes than from the innocent mouth amazed the hardened little woman to whom it was addressed to a degree that nearly imperiled the safety of a plate of sandwiches. As she confided to her lawful spouse later—but not a moment later than she could help—she was completely turned over.

"Completely turned over, I swear you! If you will believe me, she knew no more of it than Fanchette yonder!" Fanchette was a tight, hard little baby, who screwed itself into sleep with a determination evidenced in the clenched fists and puckered face. "Of an innocence tremendous! She came toward me step by step"—the woman illustrated this for the benefit of her husband—"the eyes open like one who walks in the sleep, question after question coming from her as if she had no breath and waiting for my answers as if her life was in the whole affair. At the end of it she stands, planted there, mouth gaping, and her eyes like ice. Then she flings her hands out in front of her so, and down she goes in a heap on the floor." It is possible that but for the fear of waking Fanchette out of her hard, tight sleep madame would have illustrated this also, so carried away was she by the amazing quality of the story.

"I gave her some brandy, and got

her up again. Not one word did she say to me, but stared with those eyes of hers and put her hands over her hair as if she wondered who she was. And then she turns and goes up the stairs to her room, dragging herself by the baluster as if her legs were paralyzed!"

"Thunder of God!" said Monsieur Hanniet.

"She had no more than closed her door," went on his wife, "than monsieur came in. What sort of man can he be, I ask you? Of a coldness! He looked as if he had walked all the way from Rouen—flung his hat and coat down, put his hands over his hair very much as she had done and took a drink of cognac. 'Mademoiselle has gone to her room?' he asks. 'But yes, monsieur,' say I. 'Very well. That is all,' he answers, and I come away."

"*Quelle affaire! Quelle vie blanche!*" declared Monsieur Hanniet and shook his head, either because he found it hard to believe or rather dull to contemplate.

To do her justice, the woman had not exaggerated any single detail. Not that she would not! Over the remains of the pâté and the salad and the galantine, the story, as she retailed it to her friends, would attain proportions calculated to dwarf the tales of Dumas. But for the moment, so colossal was the bare notion of the girl's goodness, imagination halted incapable of invention.

Blaisdell had met with no success in his attempt to put matters right. Lord Rexford had met him in the lobby of the hotel, alone. His eye-glass was dangling in a very eloquent signal of defeat.

"Oh, I made an effort to stop her!" he said, putting up a hand to forestall any reproach. "She went past me like an omnibus with the '*complet*' sign out. Naturally she holds me responsible for the whole affair."

"You!" said Blaisdell.

Rexford by this time had grimaced the monocle into its torturous place. "My dear fellow, I am her husband," he said, looking drolly upward into his companion's face. "Come and have a drink. What a pity to have left that

supper! Tell me your man—I might, if ever I got away alone from—er—my parliamentary duties—need his assistance. Come and have a drink and I will tell you what we will do.” He hooked his dapper little arm through Blaisdell’s and headed him off for the café. “Tomorrow morning you come around again. George will be back then—I found a note from him when I came in. My dear boy, nothing can convince me that he was not rather—well, well, that’s not here nor there. You and George and I will undertake the task—the herculean task of making her ladyship believe—what will you have? Cognac? Perhaps if we all three talk at once and talk very fast!” The old wretch laughed and let his eyeglass fall. “I’d have more hope of persuading the House to give Ireland home rule!” he said.

So it was with no very hopeful feeling of success that Blaisdell came down into the empty studio the next morning, cast one look at Léonie’s door, and departed to meet Rexford at breakfast.

And his lordship did nothing to dispel the gloom. On the contrary, he had evidently passed anything but a restful night in the Caudle bedchamber, and depression was writ large upon his visage. “George has not come yet. Julian has gone to meet him. My wife will see us in our parlor upstairs when we have finished our coffee.” Having delivered himself of this information, he relapsed into his normal matutinal apathy, in this case very gravely aggravated by recent events. Blaisdell murmured an unintelligible acknowledgment of Lord Rexford’s kindness, and the two men drank their coffee in silence.

Lady Rexford was indeed waiting for them. She had an appearance, as she sat ensconced in a large arm-chair, rigidly dressed in her usual creaking style, of some terrible sort of despotic committee of one, waiting to pass sentence on a foredoomed pair of criminals. Helena hovered near her chair, not from any desire to be a power behind the throne, but more especially to get a glimpse of Hunter

Blaisdell. A glimpse only it was to be, for they had no more than entered than her mother promptly dismissed her from the room. She went reluctantly, with a backward look at him, a look he met and returned in some perturbation.

“Good morning,” said her ladyship. “Sit down.” It was glacial, but it was a beginning. Blaisdell had not expected it to be easy, and he took his courage in his two hands in a way that stirred the rather anemic admiration of his lordship.

“I have come on an errand which you may think intrusive,” he said openly. “We all know what it is. I have many apologies to offer you, but the first is that I did not treat you fairly in the beginning by being frank with you.”

“Ah!” wheezed Lady Rexford. She made a movement as if she would have leaned back, had not her own peculiar type of fanaticism made this impossible. She cast a triumphant look at her husband.

“I was frank with Lord Rexford,” said Blaisdell, ignoring the beseeching glance that gentleman flung at him. “I told him Miss Cabert does live with me.”

“Kenneth!” said the lady in an awful voice.

“Please let me go on,” said Blaisdell.

“He felt quite certain that it was an arrangement of which you could not approve and that it would only serve to prejudice you against the little girl if you knew of it. I did not myself realize what an impossible situation it was until this complication developed. I had grown so accustomed to having her around. But when we talked this over I saw that, and yet on the moment I could think of no other way to provide for her. It all came upon me rather suddenly and I had no time to think up any feasible plans for her future. But rather than have you see her there and misjudge her, I hit upon the scheme”—oh, Lord Rexford was grateful for that!—“of keeping her out of sight for that evening, and then afterward, when I could puzzle out the problem, of arranging some more permanent way of protecting her.”

"And what, pray, is the problem?" demanded the committee of one.

"Why, the future for a young girl, a very beautiful girl, a good girl, a poor girl, an innocent girl, a girl of refinement without any great education."

"It sounds like six girls," said Rexford feebly.

"It wouldn't be half the problem it is if there were six," retorted Blaisdell promptly. "It is having all those qualities rolled into one that makes it appalling."

"There is someone at the door," said Lady Rexford. Her husband rose, jerking at his cuffs, and went to answer the knock. As he opened the door there was an interchange of quiet greetings.

"It is George," said Rexford, turning back. "Shall he come in? And Julian?" he added as an afterthought.

"Certainly," said Lady Rexford coldly.

"Come in," said he obediently, and held the door wide.

George Ritchie greeted his aunt perfunctorily. And then turned to Blaisdell as if his real business lay there. "Julian has told me what happened," he said. "I want to say that during my brief visit to your studio I gathered the same impression that Aunt Honoria has done, though naturally I could not be expected to take it in quite the same way. I was very much distressed over it, and I may say frankly that it made me feel toward you in a way that made it impossible for me to put myself under obligation to you as your guest. So I took a little run out of town to avoid you."

His clear gray eyes met Blaisdell's directly. He had characteristically put his hands into his pockets and squared his shoulders.

"Lord, Lord, how I do hate plain speaking!" said Rexford, miserably subsiding into an arm-chair and pressing his hands to his aching head.

"There is no other kind possible, just now," said Blaisdell, without taking his eyes from Ritchie's.

"I thought it over all the time I was

away, and then I decided to come back and have it out with you."

"We are all having it out," said Rexford. "It sounds like an aching tooth and it feels like one."

Her ladyship creaked and wheezed as she listened to the two men talking face to face, but intent as she was on their conversation she had time to cast a "Kenneth!" and a glare at her unfortunate husband.

"Julian met me at the train," George went on, "and told me that the matter had already reached a crisis. He also tells me that while you have acted like an idiot in placing the girl in such an equivocal position you have done no worse."

"He is right," said Blaisdell. "And I thank him for defending her."

The two men looked at one another an instant longer in an absolute silence. Then Ritchie held out his hand. "I apologize," he said. "I might have known you better."

Blaisdell drew a deep breath. "You might have known her better," he said as he put his hand into his friend's.

"That is true," said Ritchie gravely. "I ask her pardon."

"You believe this story, then?" wheezed her ladyship. The men had almost forgotten her. Ritchie dropped into a chair near her and drew out his cigarette-case. "My dear Aunt Honoria, we all believe it. What is better than that, we all know it is true! You will permit me? Thank you—Uncle Kenneth, have a smoke? Blaisdell?"

Julian leaned on the back of Lady Rexford's chair. "You understand it now, don't you, aunt?" he asked.

"Aunt Honoria has befriended too many women in her day to begin to be hard on them now, Julian," said Ritchie, striking his match.

"But of course this was an exceptionally difficult case," said the other.

"It was. And it is not to be wondered at that Aunt Honoria felt as she did. Still, now that it is all explained, we all understand it. It was a stupid tangle, but it is all straightened out now, except one part and that won't take long."

Rexford and Blaisdell looked at one another. There was a precision and a rapid fire about this fraternal conversation that suggested premeditation. Lady Rexford had not said one word, and yet somehow she stood pledged to befriend the girl. Her ladyship herself was almost bewildered. George was the only person of whom she had any fear. She had been worsted in battle with him ere now and had no desire to enter the lists at this time to be defeated in the presence of witnesses. Moreover, very tactfully she had been brought about in acknowledged agreement with them without having to go through any humiliating confession that she had been in the wrong. In the first moment she had been tempted to interfere in this high-handed use of her name and vicarious declaration of her intentions, but on second thoughts she had decided to let it go. At heart she was not a cruel woman, and she would not have wished to insist upon the girl's degradation. It did seem a lame and impotent way to conclude all her tirades on the subject, but she had the good sense to perceive that it was being done far more gracefully for her than she could have hoped to do it for herself.

"What remains to be done, of course," said Ritchie, with his first mouthful of smoke, "is to go over and square things with Léonie."

Her ladyship sat up sharply at this and her mouth opened. There were lengths—! But Julian cut in before she could formulate a word. "Yes, yes, of course, we left there last night in shockingly rude form. Naturally Aunt Honoria couldn't have done anything else under the circumstances. I mean the circumstances as they were supposed to be. But now that we all understand the situation—naturally there is only one thing for us to do."

"Noblesse oblige!" said Ritchie. "It is only gentlefolk who can ask pardon as handsomely as they grant it, isn't it, Blaisdell? And what are you going to do with Léonie now that you have waked up?"

Blaisdell groaned. "I haven't the remotest flicker of an idea," he said.

Ritchie got up and paced the floor. "It is a problem, sure enough," he said.

"I don't see," said Julian, who had never left his place behind his aunt's chair, "why you should give yourself the slightest uneasiness about it."

"Oh, don't you?" jeered Blaisdell. "Well, what do you suggest, Solomon?"

Julian's hand dropped down upon his aunt's shoulder. "I don't know what you people are thinking of," he said. "Here is Aunt Honoria with a reputation all over England for doing good and charitable things. I don't suppose she could tell you herself how many girls have had the benefit of her protection and advice. And yet it never occurs to you to ask her to add one more to the list."

"Well, I am an ass!" admitted Ritchie emphatically, stopping in the middle of the floor.

"I should think as much," said Julian. "Really, if you will excuse me for saying so, I regard the coming end of your guardianship over me, yours and uncle's, as a mere nominal formality. This is not the kind of a problem for a man to solve anyway. We might sit and stew over it until our heads were soft, and not arrive at any illumination. Whereas, I dare say, Aunt Honoria here could offhand tell us a half-dozen perfectly feasible ways of providing for the girl's future."

"Really, Julian, you take too much upon yourself, altogether!" said her ladyship somewhat sharply. "I can't promise anything of the sort. I will see what I can do, but I promise nothing."

"Heavens, no," agreed Julian, patting her shoulder again. "I didn't mean that, bless you. I have an extravagant way of talking sometimes, but I mean well. Do you know, I have been thinking, while we have been talking that poor child is over there all alone wondering what is going to happen and why we were all so cruel to her. Let's go over there and say our little say. As George says, it's a splendid chance to show what nice people we are. It would be so good of you, Aunt Honoria, if you would go over and talk to her a little."

You women have such a way! Shall I call Helen to get your bonnet—or don't you need it just to go over there?"

"Don't be a stupid! Of course I need a bonnet," said her ladyship, rising. Julian straightened as she passed him. She went out with an absent, indeterminate air as if thinking of other things. When the door of the bedroom closed upon her Julian and George looked at one another and laughed. But Lord Rexford rose gravely.

"I want to say," he said impressively, "that that is the most remarkable bit of work I ever saw carried through. George, when your uncle Alvin dies and you are in the House I hope you will swing that amazing talent in the right direction."

Blaisdell rose, too. "It was stupendous," he agreed. "But what I am most glad of is that you suggested a prompt visit to the studio. I am afraid the child is very unhappy, and I shall be glad with the whole heart, as she says, when I can see the shadow lifted from her face."

They waited in silence for her ladyship's return.

"I won't go with you, I think," said George, as she came in. "We don't want to descend upon her in regiments. I wasn't there last night, so I am rather out of just this. Helen isn't going either, is she? There's no need to terrify the girl by a formidable phalanx. Just you and Uncle Kenneth and Blaisdell—" He looked at his young brother.

"Yes, I am going," said Julian quietly. "I want to see her."

Lady Rexford gave him a quick, sharp look, and then another at George.

"We won't be gone long," she said to the latter. "You might take Helena out shopping or driving if she wants to go. I am going to take Julian to Versailles with me today." She nodded stonily at him and led the way from the room.

But once in the street she took her husband's arm and held back, letting Julian and Blaisdell go on ahead. The poor man shuddered as he thought of the plain speaking about to come, but he

was agreeably disappointed in the turn her thoughts had taken.

"Kenneth," she said, "this girl is very pretty."

"She is, my dear," said he, not too enthusiastically. He had learned truly—this Kenneth, Lord Rexford.

"And Julian is very young," she said.

"Twenty-one in eighteen days," he answered.

"It would never do!"

"It?" pleaded his slower masculine intelligence.

"That!" she returned.

"Good heavens, no! I should think not!" Her meaning had become clear to him. "Heavenly powers, what a thought!" He stared, horror-stricken, at Julian's straight young figure ahead of them. "It never occurred to me."

She nodded her head over her own superiority. "You are the boy's guardian," she said. "I don't count George—he needs a guardian himself."

"Whereas I have got one," he interposed gallantly.

She knew it, too, but paid no attention to the remark.

As Blaisdell and Julian stopped at the door of the house whither they were bound, and waited for the others to come up to them, Lady Rexford hurriedly gave him his orders. "You are his guardian, keep an eye on him. Don't let him see her too much. I'll pack her off home very soon. She can live at Rexford House with the housekeeper till I get back. Understand?"

"Yes, my dear, I will do my best," he said soothingly.

"If you don't do better than that," she retorted with a grim sarcasm, "the case is as good as lost. Don't wait, Mr. Blaisdell. I will let you go up ahead. Large bodies move slowly. You go on and that will give you time to let her know we are coming up."

"Thank you," said Blaisdell. "You are most considerate. I apologize again a thousand times for the stairs."

"One for each step," said Rexford, and Blaisdell laughed back at him as he went up ahead of them.

They followed slowly, Lord Rexford in front as pacemaker to her ladyship, while Julian brought up the rear, so slowly that Blaisdell had had time to search the studio and the adjoining rooms, to realize the truth, and to meet them with it as they came up. He stood in his doorway looking down into their three upturned faces, trying to master a strange feeling in his throat. "She is gone," he said.

They all stood there motionless. "But surely," said Rexford, "you can't know that she has really gone. She may have run out on an errand."

"No, she is gone," said Blaisdell. "I feel it, I know it. I was a blind fool not to have expected it. She is gone." He repeated the phrase dully in the first stunned feeling of incomprehension.

"And good riddance, too," breathed Lady Rexford inwardly as she panted on the stairs. "She'll turn up again, though," she reflected. "Nuisances always do."

Rexford and Blaisdell continued to look at one another and her ladyship to pant and stare and listen for something further. Nobody seemed to notice that Julian had turned and was running rapidly down the stairs.

X

THE transparent perfection of a glowing April day in Venice had filled the city-in-the-sea with a glorious exhilaration. From the reflecting walls of the houses the sunlight shone doubly warm and sparkled on the surface of the Grand Canal. The sky hung banner-blue, above the spires and domes, like the crowning gift of God to a fortunate world. Full of that softness which is a promise of riper warmth to come, the air frolicked lightly, rippling the water that lapped upon the steps of the hotel, and ruffling mischievously the new foliage behind the courtyard wall as if to tickle the nose of one of Venice's bashful lions who had hidden his face therein. Three or four gondolas, lying in picturesque idleness

between the creaking posts of their station, rose and dipped gracefully on the waves momentarily engendered by the passing of a pestiferous steam launch with a virulent whistle. In the gondolas going by, on the steps and terraces of the hotels about, there was an amiable crowd of lazy and contented people drifting in placid satisfaction through the early hours of a golden day.

The serenity of the setting was supreme, yet in the gondola but then arriving silently and skilfully at the steps there sat four people noticeably out of harmony with the surroundings. A large creaking lady with a ruddy, stony face sat in the stern, and beside her a slender dark English beauty, who was her daughter. In one arm-chair sat a rather small, middle-aged gentleman, almost too perfectly collared and cravated, and opposite to him on the little leather seat a young, pleasant-looking American, with a soft hat pulled dejectedly down on the back of his head. All four were nervous and unhappy and in varying degree disagreeable, the minimum being recordable of the young lady and the maximum of her mother.

"Kenneth," said the large lady, "will you go in and ask?"

With a murmur of willingness and impatience, the little man rose, caught feverishly at the hand of the servant on the steps and left the gondola lighter by one hundred and sixty pounds.

Blaisdell, who looked a year older than he had two weeks previous, pushed the hat still farther back on his head and glanced at the young lady. She tried to smile at him, but recent association with her parents had crushed all heart out of the expression. Lady Rexford sighed—it was almost a groan—and leaned back against the cushion. The position was untenable, however, and she straightened again.

They were all looking rather fagged, as a matter of fact, having come post-haste, and almost without stopping, from Paris after a few days of immeasurable strain. Blaisdell indeed had had the hardest time of all, for not

only did he hold himself responsible for whatever might have happened to Léonie after her disappearance before they had news of her, but her ladyship held him equally responsible for what they came to know had happened and spared no occasion to make him feel it keenly. Indeed nothing but his growing attachment for Helena, and the fact that his search for Léonie must naturally be conducted along the same lines as their search for Julian, kept him in her vicinity at all.

The first day of the disappearance, before Julian was actually missed, she had been rather kind. Personally she had gone with Blaisdell—to his no very great joy, though he appreciated the intention—on his galloping round of inquiry, and had even, after the failure of all possible clues, accompanied him to the police while he asked their assistance. But on the following morning, when Julian had not been seen for twenty-four hours, her manner underwent a woeful change. Blaisdell, tortured as he was by misgiving and apprehension, was rendered more frantic by her persistent nagging, and if anything were needed to complete the admiration in which he was held by her ladyship's daughter, the superhuman patience he exhibited under that treatment finished the matter.

He had come in, wet through from tramping about in the rain with his ceaseless inquiries, weary to the breaking point, and nearly at his wits' end with grisly foreboding, to meet George at an appointed hour and exchange reports of progress—for George Ritchie, as indefatigable as he, had been scouring the city in other directions. The fact that she had taken no money with her had led them to believe she was still in Paris, and yet the knowledge served to increase a thousandfold their fears for her safety. None of them could pass the Seine, that grave of so many broken hearts, without a bitter horror.

George and he had met in the Rexfords' apartment, and the reports of their progress were amply expressed in their simultaneous gestures of failure

and despair. Helena was there, and her father.

Then suddenly her ladyship had burst in from her bedroom, not quite so creakingly and tautly attired as usual, with a note in her hand. She flung it at Blaisdell as if she wished it were a bullet and her large, hard hand a revolver, and developed a full-fledged case of hysteria on the instant.

There was little in the note, being as a matter of fact four words. "I have found her." Blaisdell looked at the page a moment and handed it to George. As he turned away into the window his eyes filled with tears and Helena with one of her rare natural impulses went to him and put her hand in his.

It was from this moment on that her ladyship had made his life a burden to his soul, in spite of George's frequent interpositions that she really could not justly hold him responsible for Julian's actions. During the days that followed, when no further news came, poor Blaisdell underwent a course of treatment that Rexford said in confidence would have landed him in a private sanatorium. But the fact that through this connection only was he likely to hear more of Léonie, and the desire to be on hand ready to serve her at her first call, kept him with them, and helped him to endure.

Then at last a letter came, from Julian to George. It was brief enough in all conscience, but it was information at least. Léonie had been ill, and he had been too busy and anxious to write. He had rested secure in the knowledge that George would trust him to do everything as well as the mind of man could devise. He was taking her to Venice now. She was quite well again, but he thought the Southern air would be gentler.

George read this letter aloud to the assembled family. Her ladyship dissolved in tears of helpless rage, Helena watched Blaisdell's face, and Rexford paced the room chewing his mustache.

During the silence that followed, if silence it can be called that was rent by the lady's vociferous sobs, Lord Rexford came to a pause in his walk and

his cogitation. "I wonder," he said, "if he has married her?"

"I beg your pardon?" thundered George, swinging about to face him. And that was all there was said about that!

Her ladyship continued to wail angrily, and Helena continued to look at Blaisdell. George folded up the note and put it into his pocket. "I am going back to England now," he said quietly.

It was after his departure, which was immediate, that Lord and Lady Rexford came to that decision prompting the descent on Venice. Julian was still a minor, his guardian had not given his consent—the affair had a leak in it yet that with judicious widening could sink it.

Blaisdell, distressed beyond all telling, could in no wise interfere in Lord Rexford's management of his family affairs. He merely requested to be allowed to accompany them—he felt himself responsible for Léonie's future.

So they were in Venice at the steps of one of the many hotels making inquiry for a certain Mr. Julian Ritchie, and it was here they found him.

Lord Rexford made a hurried trip to the hotel office and back to the steps. "He is here," he said, nodding. The concierge, bowing and affable, came out behind him, and personally helped the ladies to descend.

"You," said Rexford to the gondolier, with natural imperative rudeness, "wait."

The gondolier lifted his white cap gracefully. "Si, signore," he bowed, and as Lady Rexford got out last of all, pushed his long craft unerringly back to join the other gondolas.

"Mr. Ritchie is on the terrace," said the concierge, bowing again. "Will you go out?"

"What way?" snorted her ladyship.

"If madame will follow me!" He led them back through the parlor of the hotel to where a transverse passage cut across before the office desk. At one end of this corridor a vista of a garden showed. The concierge waved

his followers' attention toward it, and bowed again.

The newcomers obediently went down the passageway and out into the open, where a row of small tables was ranged along the white, green-screened wall.

It was at one of these that Julian was sitting—the only guest upon the terrace. He was dressed in white flannels, his head was bare and he was smoking. At his chair stood a waiter, with head obsequiously bowed.

He looked up as they emerged from the doorway, and slowly rose. A momentary shade of vexation passed over his face, but departed almost instantly, leaving it as uncloudedly brilliant as the day itself. He had always been a remarkable-looking fellow, almost too handsome for a man, had his bones not been so masculine and his flesh so iron-hard. But there was that about him now that was positively startling. It flashed in his quiet smile as he came forward to greet them, it glowed in his gray eyes, it radiated from his whole being.

"You take me by surprise," he said calmly. There was Helena to be kissed and Aunt Honoria, and the men's hands to be shaken, and he did it all with an easy cordiality that amazed them. Just what Lady Rexford had expected she might not have been able quite to say herself, but she had come hard-hearted for the fray, and it disconcerted her to find herself suddenly engulfed in an atmosphere of tranquil commonplace. She had felt that something revolutionary and dramatic was going to take place, and instead of that the meeting had no more of the unusual about it than if they had been greeting one another every day.

"I am just ordering *déjeuner*," he said. "May I include you?"

They all made a movement of courteous refusal. "We have just come from the table," said Rexford. "I wanted to have a talk with you."

"By all means," said Julian. He towered above the other men, indeed like one of the gods come back to earth. "Sit down over here," said he, leading

the way back to his table, "and excuse me if I go on with my ordering, will you? Léonie will be down in a moment."

He helped the waiter to draw up some chairs and smiled at them. "Sit down, sit down," he said pleasantly. Lady Rexford and Helena obeyed him, but Blaisdell leaned against the wall of the garden and Rexford stood restlessly about near-by.

"Louis," said Julian, "what about that orange juice?"

"It is as monsieur ordered!" replied the waiter, bending impressively over his shoulder.

"Six oranges?" said Julian. The man nodded and murmured an assent, an emphatic assent at every pause. "The juice in a bottle? No sugar? In a pail of ice? Turned between the hands for two hours? Served with one tablespoonful of shaved ice in a tall glass?"

"In two tall glasses," corrected the man.

Julian smiled. "Exactly, in two tall glasses. That is all right, is it?"

"But certainly, but certainly! The boy has been turning the bottle since ten o'clock."

"Very well," said Julian. "Let us see what next. Blaisdell, won't you smoke?" He pushed his cigarette-case across the table as he spoke.

The besieging party was fairly speechless. But her ladyship managed in this lull to wheeze out disgustedly, "I did not know you cared for this sort of thing, Julian!"

He looked up from the menu and smiled inquiringly. "What do you mean, aunt—things to eat? I never did care very much before. That's the wonderful part of it. I care about everything now! I take a positive thrill of delight in tying my cravat as she likes it, I enjoy the mere brushing of my hair, and I find there are undreamed-of possibilities for satisfaction in the selection of a pair of socks!" He laughed over it so happily that she felt for the first time in all her life a pang of envy. "But when it comes to doing something personally for her,

finding something nice for her to eat, or ordering her gondola at the hour she wants it, or seeing that she hasn't forgotten her wraps and her parasol, or going into a shop with her to get something she has seen and liked—well, it is positively intoxicating. I didn't know there was such a concentrated essence of happiness producible." He looked at the menu again and tossed it down. "Oh, there's nothing there," he said to the ever-bending waiter. "Tell Henri to send us in some eggs Beatrice—one egg poached on a heart of artichoke, the sauce poured over and baked a minute. He knows."

"One egg?" said Louis.

"Well, of course, two eggs," replied Julian, laughing a look at Blaisdell, who was smiling.

"But certainly, monsieur. And then?"

"Then—let us see," said Julian slowly. He picked up the menu again and looked it over. "How did you happen all of you to come to Venice?" he inquired almost inattentively.

"George read us your letter," said Rexford.

"But George did not come!" returned Julian quietly. "Is that sole good? Probably neither good nor sole."

"But certainly, but certainly," protested Louis half indignantly. "It is very good, indeed."

"I'll take your word for it. Tell Henri to serve a sauce—separately, mind you! And bring me some cress, fresh and crisp. I'll make a dressing—you know what I want."

"Eschalot vinegar, oil, paprika, mustard and a little mashed potato," murmured Louis as he wrote.

"Quite so," said Julian. "And a bottle of Berncastler-Doktor. There, that is finished. I beg your pardon all of you for having taken so long. But it is so hard to think of anything good enough to put before her. You were saying that——"

"That George read us your letter," said Lady Rexford. "I must say, Julian, that your treatment of us has been outrageous!"

He looked quite gravely at her. "I am very sorry for it," he said. "But from the moment I found her I was so desperately taken up with caring for her——"

"Where did you find her?" said Blaisdell. "We nearly went mad those two days, searching."

"I am sorry for that, too. I found her—where I knew she would be—in the place where we read 'Endymion' together."

"And how in the world did you know she would be there?"

"For two reasons," said Julian. "I find that the same two reasons explain everything in the world." He looked up at Blaisdell and smiled. "I love her and she loves me." With the thrill of his voice the words sounded new, as if they had never been said before. The sound of them lingered in the air and the smile faded from his face. "She was in a pitiable state," he said, "utterly bewildered and crushed. You see she had not understood—but the concierge, at your place, Blaisdell, had explained."

"Explained?" repeated Blaisdell, bending forward.

"Brutally," said Julian, meeting his eyes.

"Oh, poor child, poor child!" said Blaisdell. "I never thought of that! I never thought of that."

"It was rather dreadful," said Julian. "She was like a little bird that had been cruelly handled. She was so terrified that she was even afraid of me."

"Afraid of you!" snorted her ladyship suddenly. "Yet I notice she married you."

"Well, do you know I didn't think she would. I had a very hard time persuading her that she must. I think I clinched the matter by making her understand that I was going to marry her, and in that case it would complicate matters terribly if she didn't marry me."

"Humph!" said Lady Rexford.

"Really, Julian, you need not be ridiculous," said his uncle testily. "Don't tell me she thought seriously of refusing a Ritchie."

"Next of kin to the Rexfords," said madam.

Julian's generous eyes narrowed a bit as he answered this. "That was just the trouble," he said. "We hadn't impressed her as a particularly agreeable family to marry into!"

Blaisdell had a sympathetic look of amusement for this, but it somehow became deflected from Julian and landed full on Helena. From that moment on the girl was radiant.

"But I finally did persuade her, you see. And I feel as if someone had lifted a bandage from my eyes that had been there since my birth, and had shown me the mountains and the sea and 'the world which the Lord hath made.'" His voice was quietly sincere, but Rexford refused to admit himself impressed.

"Nonsense," he said. "Poetic nonsense." The matter had gone far enough. "A little prose sense is what you need knocked into you, young man."

Julian lighted a cigarette and laughed. "You think poetry is for the bookshelves," he said. "I don't agree with you. Poetry is to be lived. I am living it—cantos of it! And I intend to go on living it all my life!" He flung up his head as he said it.

But Lord Rexford had his trump card yet to play, and he was angry. "You are a silly young jackanapes," he said petulantly. "Poetry, indeed! I'll tell you where poetry doesn't have much to say. You are not even of age, confound you, and yet you sit up there and defy me. We will see which one of us comes uppermost in this fight, poetry or prose!"

His nephew leaned back and looked at him. "You can't do anything," he said. "What can you do? There you are, here I am. Why, Uncle Kenneth, you don't know what you are dealing with. You could hurl the whole House of Parliament at me and it wouldn't make a dent in me!" He was on his feet then, and facing them. "Nothing can hurt, nothing matters—you don't matter! I have got her, and she is mine. And you can bombard until

your guns are cracked and she will still be mine!"

Lord Rexford, at this open defiance, boiled over. "Indeed, indeed! And if I have this marriage annulled, what then? Eh, what then?"

"Marriage annulled?" repeated Julian, looking round at them. "That was it, was it?"

"No! No!" said Blaisdell and Helen in one voice, and Julian smiled at them as he turned back to Rexford. The young, stalwart beauty of him faced the little old reprobate a moment in silence. Then very quietly he said:

"Annul the marriage? Why, what do you think a marriage is, anyhow?"

Rexford blustered under this. "You'll soon find out, my fine fellow! And I'd like to see with what forces you will oppose me."

"I'll tell you!" said Julian, and his hand came down upon the table. "I will oppose you with the strongest forces God ever let loose upon this earth, the most invincible and powerful that have ever swayed the world. Youth and love—that is what they are. Sneer at them if you want to. Be-little them, cavil at them. I tell you you have no weapons to fight them. You call them conditions—but they are forces. They are the father and mother of life itself!"

There was a breathless pause. Then Helen sobbed and Blaisdell went toward her. But she was smiling at him as he came.

Lord Rexford opened his indignant mouth several times and said nothing. He turned a little toward his wife and was amazed to see that she was staring at young Julian with reminiscent eyes a-swim with tears. In the silence Léonie came out into the garden.

She saw them all and stopped. Then she went straight to him. The question in her eyes was not for herself; as she looked into his face, she looked to see if they had made him suffer. The light upon his face as their eyes met was what she sought. With a murmured word that was not a word she turned beside him and faced the others, too.

In their white clothes as they stood there in the sunlight, its alchemy turning their blond heads to something more than gold, they looked like the beginners of a new race, a people who would draw the angels down. Transfigured by the glory of that force of love, they shone quite radiant, as in something beyond the touch of other men, something aloof and holy and resplendent.

Blaisdell stepped forward first and kissed her hand.



WATER-SPRITES

By Clinton Scollard

OVER the hill-slopes and down through the hollows
 The silver-clad water-sprites rally and run;
 As fleet are their feet as the wings of the swallows,
 And whither they fare there's a gladness that follows
 As fresh and as bright and as blithe as the sun.

And lo! at their touch there awakens, there kindles,
 A subtle, pervasive, unnamable thing!
 The blight upon beauty, like darkness it dwindles,
 For the workers of wonder are whirling their spindles,
 And fingers are lithe on the loom of the Spring.

THEIR LITTLE WAYS

By Caroline Duer

WHEN my friend Tom Singleton broke his leg I was exceedingly sorry for him; but when he confided to me that he had arranged a meeting with Miss Leveret—whose parents did not approve of him—at the Grand Central Station on the arrival of the afternoon train from Glencliff, and that owing to his accident I must go in his place and explain matters to the young lady, I transferred the sorrow to myself. For I am a lazy man and do not court adventures; particularly those of other people.

Still, there appeared to be no help for it. Here was Tom stretched upon a bed of suffering. Here was I hale and hearty. And there was Miss Leveret, who had to be met by somebody. I must explain at once that she and Tom had had no intention of eloping. She was just passing through town on her way heaven-knows-where, and they had merely seized upon the chance of spending the afternoon together. This chance Fate, who is no respecter of persons, had removed from them, and it seemed clearly indicated that I should go and break the ill news to the party of the first part.

I undertook the commission with no great graciousness. My acquaintance with Miss Leveret was slight, and I was quite sure she would resent my knowing (what she'd naturally know I knew) the terms that she and Tom were on. It was altogether extremely awkward.

"I should think the Lord had provided against your tumbling off your own feet," I remarked crossly, as I took up my hat. "And I wish to heaven you'd chosen any other day to knock yourself up!"

Tom, who had slipped and battered his knee against the curb while dragging a bullet-headed urchin from in front of an automobile, grinned faintly and said nothing. After all, he knew he had done the thing rather well, if he *were* the worse for it, and being generally of a magnificent size he could afford to ignore my reflections on the especially good support furnished him by nature. "I suppose I'd better be off," I added, with a vindictive look at the clock. "If one goes on a fool's errand at all, one may as well go in time."

And I shut the door of the apartment after me and betook myself stationward in a state of mild irritation.

That particular part of the building where one waits for incoming trains was crowded. A wedge-shaped mass of people stretched from the gates in two wings across the concrete floor. Evidently all the world and his wife had come to meet his wife's relations. Train after train came in. (I knew the exact minute the loved one's was due, because Tom had told me three times in succession and once more for luck!) Disheveled travelers streamed between the walls of watching faces. The most amiably offensive individuals met and kissed each other. Mothers clasped sunburned children. Fathers loaded themselves with all sorts of hand-baggage. Alert young persons plucked bewildered elderly relatives from the mixed throng. But no deliberate, delicately stepping Miss Leveret appeared to gladden my expectant eyes.

The bulletin-board announced that her chariot wheels had not tarried. I had noted with heart-throbs the arrival

of the local which should have borne her from Glenclyff, and anxiously scrutinized each approaching figure. Yet the fact remained that hers had not presented itself. Nobody had escaped me. She simply had not come!

I remembered that Tom had mumbled something about another train, which could be caught from another station on another road, and arrived some twenty minutes later, and I reluctantly admitted to myself that my whole duty would not have been fulfilled until I had seen that train get in and discharge its passengers.

Twenty minutes is a miserable time to wait! It is too long to be faced—quiescent—with equanimity, and too short to allow one to go anywhere and get back. I took two turns, one of which almost brought me out of the station, and then thought better of it and threw myself down on a bench.

A lady in dark blue, who was sitting at the other end of it, looked up with a start, and, after what I suppose was an instant's examination of me behind her veil, gave a curious little bow that seemed to half-recognize me and then stop short with a sudden conviction that after all she surely didn't.

I replied to her first intention by raising my hat at once and moving nearer to her. I did not recognize her in the least, but it was an occasion when more might very well know Tom-fool (or I might have said Tom's fool) than Tomfool knew, and besides, I was in need of distraction if ever a man was, so I accepted the situation with alacrity. Perhaps—coincidences as odd have occurred—she was even a friend of Miss Leveret's sent to apprise that lady's lover that *she* had met with an accident and could not come.

The idea struck me as so amusing that involuntarily I chuckled. My companion glanced at me in surprise and I pulled myself up quickly, for it suggested itself to me that I had better not indulge in too much hilarity till I was certain where I, or rather where we both, stood. I must reconnoiter. I tried the beginnings of several sentences

in my mind. The silence grew embarrassing.

"Life's a ridiculous thing," I observed at last agreeably, in a large, vague way, "and drifts the most delightfully unexpected people together. Here I am waiting, and *you* are waiting——"

I paused, hoping she would fill out the remark in some manner which might give me a clue to her identity or her reason for being where she was.

"I shall not wait much longer," she returned with determination.

This was rather disconcerting as an answer, and she turned a little away after she had spoken, as if she artlessly repented the impulse that had led her into her present position in regard to me and wished I'd take no further advantage of it. I understood, but I did not pay any attention. No man with twenty minutes to kill would have.

"It's a perfectly detestable way of spending time, as a rule," I said, politely qualifying the vehemence of my first statement. "Especially when one is doing it for other people."

"But one always *is* doing it for other people," she took me up, this time with more good-comradeship. "Gracious! If one had only oneself to wait for!"

She left it to be inferred that one's patience would not be much strained. I thought this an excellent time for explanations, and began at once.

"What I mean is, that it's particularly trying when you're taking the place of the person to whom the waiting legitimately belongs," I observed.

"Is that what you're doing?"

"Yes." (I was glad to see she appeared interested.) "I am meeting someone—whom I don't know very well and who won't want to meet me—because another someone, who *was* to have been here, is prevented from coming; is incapacitated, in fact."

Now, I thought, if she is on a similar errand she will mention it, and if not, perhaps she'll mention it, too. But she didn't.

"How complicated it all sounds," she said in the easy tone one uses to

commiserate one's neighbor's woes. "Do you *have* to do it?"

"As much as one has to do anything—but die," I answered gloomily.

She laughed. "I suppose we all do a lot of things we don't *really* have to before it comes to *that*," she hazarded.

"And that would be much better left undone," I added, thinking of my wasted afternoon and the imbecility of Tom's wanting to meet Miss Leveret like this anyhow.

"Or done *differently*," she rejoined with emphasis, thinking of I don't know what, but thinking of it angrily.

"The good-nature that lets itself be imposed upon is almost absurd," I continued, looking at my watch and seeing that I had still fifteen minutes between me and freedom.

"I quite agree with you," she said bitterly.

"Good-nature," I went on, rather enjoying my own gentlemanly-essayist style, "is, according to Marion Crawford, a combination of the vulgarity that wants to please everybody and the weakness that cannot say no. It's a perfect picture of me; of all of us, I dare say."

"I'm afraid I don't feel much like pleasing people," she answered shortly.

"That's it. You don't feel like it, but you can't help doing it," I affirmed.

She looked at me sharply to see whether my intentions were of the foolishly complimentary order, but seemed satisfied with my expression, or rather my lack of it.

"It's the curse of amiability," I resumed despondently. "I believe we'd sit here all night rather than disappoint anyone."

"Really, there are limits to my patience," said the lady, rising on this with some abruptness. "Good-bye. I'm going."

"Oh, *don't* leave me," I cried in despair. "I've got ten minutes more."

She paused on the point of what was going to be a flight, and stood still an instant as if considering something. Then suddenly adopting the most coaxing manner in the world:

"*Don't* stay, Mr. Mannering," she said.

"Don't stay?" I echoed stupidly, amazed at the idea, the change of tone, the fact that she knew my name.

"No. Come with me. What does it really matter who arrives, or who meets them? If they don't find us, they—well, they'll know we're not here. I've got a motor outside. Come for a drive. We'll go into the country somewhere—anywhere—for a spin and get some fresh air into our lungs and some nice new thoughts into our heads. And then you'll come back and dine with me——"

She happened to raise her veil as she spoke.

"I'll do it," said I, jamming my watch back into my pocket and throwing duty and discretion to the winds. "Where you go, I go, and all the rest of it."

"Ah, now you are a little rash," she said, laughing back at me over her shoulder as she led the way out of the building. "You don't know what may be involved in 'the rest of it.'"

"There are occasions," I rejoined pompously, "when recklessness is wisdom; and I know those occasions!"

"And aren't afraid to make the most of them! Bravo, Mr. Mannering! I do hate a cautious man."

Her repetition of my name was a challenge, but I was unable to respond to it. Look as I would I could not tell who she was, although I was sure I had seen her exceedingly charming face before somewhere.

"No. You would not remember," she said, answering my thoughts. "And what difference does it make? We've chanced to be in the same company at the same houses once or twice, and I happen to know who you are. But don't let us think of that. Just let us suppose we are the first man and the first woman in the world—or the last man and the last woman, for that matter—and enjoy ourselves. Only it wouldn't be half so much fun if we *were*," she added, with an irrepressible little giggle, as naïve as a schoolgirl's.

"I'll forget what I must, remember

what I may, and enjoy myself with all my heart," said I, "but—am I never to know?"

She was, however, busying herself at the moment in tying her veil in a complicated number of strange knots, and did not answer.

The automobile that approached (with some difficulty) as she appeared on the sidewalk had nothing distinctive about it. It was the color, size and shape of a dozen others of the same make. The chauffeur had a dark mustache and a large pair of goggles—so have a hundred others. (I must say I prefer a clean-shaved servitor of whatever class, myself, but that's neither here nor there.) She called him William, or Williams—a not uncommon name.

There seemed nothing but the lady herself on which to fix my curious attention with any hope of solving the riddle she presented, and I fixed my attention there forthwith. As I settled myself back comfortably in the cushioned seat I forgot Miss Leveret as completely as if she had never been fashioned out of pink blanc-mange (if there is such a thing) and turned out into the world to captivate Tom Singleton. I cared for nothing but black-haired mysteries with greenish eyes and whimsical dispositions.

Where we went I don't know. My companion was amusing, unexpected, capricious, artless and artful in the most confusing way. She seemed to have simple streaks and sophisticated streaks; to be old and young, grave and gay, gentle and fierce by turns about things in general and particular. She melted and froze—melting with ice in the air, so to speak, and freezing with still a touch of the sun—and all the time that she was spinning light webs of conversation and settling upon fresh subjects with the touch of a bird on a twig I had the feeling that she was weighing the advisability of trusting me with some especial personal confidence.

I was vaguely aware that we had left town long ago, that we had passed through green places, caught glimpses

of water here and there, plunged down steep hills, speeded over flat country roads, crossed bridges, and returned upon our tracks again, but it was not until the vistas of the streets stretched before us once more that she partially fulfilled my expectations.

"How many times do you think one ought to forgive a person for making and breaking an appointment with one?" she demanded tentatively.

"The same person, I suppose," said I, with the air of a seer.

She laughed. "Of course; and the same kind of an appointment. Well?"

"About half of once," I replied easily.

"I've done it twice," she said, "and it makes me furious to think of it! Oh, naturally there were excuses——"

"There *must* have been," I put in pointedly.

"But I don't propose to stand it again," she went on. "There can't be any good reason for—for anything he's done or left undone, and if there were I don't want to hear it. I've finished with that episode."

"A husband—" I began impressively.

"He's not my husband."

"I knew that," I said. "Do give me credit for some sense! I was going to say that a husband couldn't be dismissed episodically, even in these days, and what a mercy it was you had stopped in time."

"Stopped in time?" she repeated.

"In time to prevent his insisting upon your making him one," I explained.

"Oh," she said. And then after an instant, "It hadn't quite got to that, Mr. Mannering."

"But it was getting there?"

"Well, perhaps."

"You were considering?"

She broke into her sudden irrepressible little chuckle.

"No. *He* was. He's had so many flirtations I don't think he's *quite* sure whether I'm there" (she put her hand on her heart) "to *stay* or not! He's a—a sort of a cousin of mine, Mr. Mannering."

"Oh, then that accounts for it," I remarked.

"For what?"

"For his affairs. He can't help it; it's in the blood."

She began to laugh again.

"He's awfully fond of me," she said, "and *he* doesn't know he's considering. I just know it."

"Well, we'll save him the trouble of making up his mind," I declared.

"That we will," said she. "You don't want to stop and dress for dinner, do you? You'll come as you are?"

"I'll come any way you'll have me," I returned. "Where are we going?"

"To my—to the place where I'm staying," she answered with reticence. Then in sudden enjoyment of the situation: "Good gracious, how angry he'll be!"

"You think he may turn up in the course of the evening?"

She nodded. "More than likely."

"We'll be ready for him. Are we to be long-lost lov—I mean, friends? If so, I really ought to know what to call you."

"No, no. We'll be strangers—as of course we are—and I've just whisked you off for a drive—as I really did—and as a final coup I'll ask him to introduce you to me."

"I see. The possibilities are all to be in the future," said I.

"Well, almost anything might come of it," she remarked, looking off into the distance.

"So it might," I agreed, looking closely at her.

It was half-past seven when we drew up at a great, square, brownstone paper-weight of a house, with an elaborate grilled entrance on a level with the sidewalk. The motor shot away without any directions from my companion (quite as if it were a fairy motor, and might be due in the garden any minute as a pumpkin), and we walked past a solemn black butler—I allude to his apparel only—into a solemn white hall and up a marble staircase. At the top of it the lady paused.

"Wardwell will look after you," she

said. "I'll just go and take off my hat. I'll be back directly."

Wardwell ushered me into an imposing red-walled room, full of old furniture and modern pictures, and left me. As the lady had declared a change of headgear and an immediate return were to be expected, I was not surprised when fifteen minutes or more elapsed before she made her appearance in a wonderful tea-gown, looking even prettier and (if possible) more mysterious than she had when shadowed by a hat and swathed in veils. Sometimes it is a distinct disappointment when a woman removes her veil, but I had been sure, since the glimpse I had of her at the station, that in her case the nearer one regarded her face the greater would be one's admiration. And there she was, her black hair almost blue in the deeper waves, her greenish eyes sparkling with mischief, her little nose as white as bone—not with powder, either—and her cheeks flushed with excitement; altogether a most alluring little person. I was sorry for the gentleman who was "a sort of a cousin," and I thanked my stars that I was to sit opposite to so pretty a picture at table. After all, as she had said, there was no telling what might come of it! In my imagination I—but never mind!

Wardwell announced dinner, and we went from the red room through a small gray-and-white one into an oak-paneled dining-room, large, low-ceilinged, mullion-windowed, a fitting background for her charming figure in its old-fashioned brocaded gown. Excellent food was set before us, admirable wine was served, the company of each appeared agreeable to the other. What more would one have?

I have every reason to believe we were exceptionally amusing. It was one of those times when the right thing—the perfect twist of light-hearted thrust and repartee, rose without effort to the mind and translated itself into speech. The atmosphere seemed charged with electricity. We were at that entrancingly spontaneous moment of accord that comes only to

suddenly intimate strangers of kindred spirit, and as we left the table and sauntered, with a little glance of mutual content toward the drawing-room, I felt that Fate had indeed snatched me a golden plum of a day from the tree of the years. This poetical metaphor appeared to me so happy that I was about to give it utterance when I found Wardwell and coffee at my elbow, and by the time I had helped myself and, further, selected a cigar, the propitious moment had flown.

The lady leaned back languidly in her chair when we were left alone.

"It's rather funny to think what has become of the people whom we—who were expecting us to meet them," said she. "I wonder where they are now?"

"I'm not giving them a thought," I answered blithely. "You said we were to be the first man and the first woman."

"No, no, the last," she reminded me. "I settled upon the last. If we were the first we shouldn't have amused ourselves half so well. The consciousness of others helps, doesn't it?"

"I'd just as lief be the last," I agreed amiably. "But I'm afraid I'd lost consciousness of any others."

"Well, we've got to think of one of them presently, I suppose," she observed; and I thought she sighed.

"Oh, don't let him in," said I. "What's the use of spoiling the evening?"

"I'd like him to know you're here."

"Tell him tomorrow."

"But men have no imaginations," she objected. "If he didn't see you himself, he wouldn't believe——"

"That I was here at all?" I put in as she paused.

"That you were so much the kind of—of person whose being here mattered," she finished.

This was very satisfactory.

"Am I that kind of person?" I demanded, just to hear her say it again.

"Emphatically, you are."

"Let him come, then," said I. "He won't stay long."

"This is what will happen," she began, and then broke off to explain. "You see, he's out in the country just now, and he only comes into town because I'm staying here."

"And doesn't always arrive," I suggested, with malicious intent.

"Oh, sooner or later he does, full of excellent excuses. But I can't stand being kept waiting. I go off suddenly like a bottle of champagne and all the effervescence escapes."

"I'm glad it wasn't lost on this occasion."

"So am I. It's an awful thing to waste the cream of high spirits, isn't it, Mr. Mannering? Suppose we hadn't met each other— No. Never mind! Don't let's suppose anything so awful! Well, I was going to tell you. He'll have missed his train or something, and he'll come here to tell me all about it. He'd have telephoned or telegraphed, otherwise. He'll appear in the doorway and find us *deeply* interested in each other."

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot," I threw in.

"Just like that, only more so. And I'll look up and say in a sort of bored, disturbed tone, 'Oh, Dick—' Dear me, Mr. Mannering, I've told you his name! But you'd have to know it! 'Oh, Dick,' I'll say, '*what* on earth brings you here *tonight*? Is there anything wrong?' And he'll say, 'Why, you knew I was coming.' And I'll say, 'I *did* think so, but when you didn't turn up at the train I thought you wouldn't.' And the talk will go on till my not introducing you grows awkward, and then it will gradually come out what we've done, and that I don't know who you are. And *then*—there'll be the greatest to-do!"

"And that's where I come in and he goes out," said I.

We looked at each other and began to laugh.

Ten o'clock found us still entertained and entertaining, though my companion seemed to have lost the sharper brilliance of our earlier mood. She was more thoughtful; at times her answers came slowly, as if she were

weighing what I said, while her inscrutable green eyes gazed through me into a mysterious beyond. I found her, however, even more charming. She had confided to me that the fairy house and the fairy motor were hers by right of guestship for the time that it took her to set her own small domicile in order, and belonged to a fairy godmother whose return from abroad she was expecting.

"She likes to find me here when she gets home," she ended simply.

"So would anyone," exclaimed I, obviously enough; but she did not hear me. For the first time that evening a remark of mine hung in the air.

"Isn't that the bell?" she cried, starting to her feet.

"What if it is?" said I.

"It may be Dick."

"It's too late," I declared. "He's no business to come to see you at this hour. Ridiculous!"

"If it should be——"

"Let it be," I said stoutly.

"Oh, wait one moment, Mr. Manner-ing," she begged, and dashed out of the room.

I wondered how long it would take her to get rid of him. I walked up and down the room a dozen times. Nothing happened. I went out into the hall. Silence. Was the fellow making trouble, I asked myself, and if so, what had I better do? I paused in some uncertainty of mind, and just at that moment my eyes caught sight of the reflection in a long mirror of two

dim figures in another room. My lady of the tea-gown was almost swallowed up in the embrace of a great, yellow-haired giant!

I turned quickly away.

"I was angry at first," I heard her say, "but since then I've been so anxious! Oh, Dick, if you'd been hurt in that accident——"

The furthest corner of the drawing-room contained me as she entered—alone.

"Mr. Manner-ing," she began, red and stammering, "would you mind——?"

"*Would you mind*—would you think I was deserting you—if I said good night?" I interposed tragically. "I have the most awful attack of neuralgia. Will you think me rude? *Don't think me rude!*"

She said she would not.

"Where under the sun have you been?" demanded my outraged friend, Mr. Singleton, when I returned to him half an hour later. "I had a telegram from Miss Leveret a little while after you left telling me she wasn't coming. And I sent my man up to the station to find you at once, and you weren't there."

"Wasn't I?" said I. "Well, all right."

"What became of you?" persisted the invalid tactlessly.

I fixed him with a stony eye.

"I have been lost for five and a half hours," I informed him, "and I am now found. Let that suffice."



FROM THE DEVIL'S NOTE-BOOK

DEATH came near to her when she was young and beautiful.

"Oh, have mercy!" she cried. "I am not prepared to die—there is too much before me."

Death desisted, but returned a few years later. The woman held forth her trembling hands in supplication:

"Spare me! Have mercy! I am not prepared to die—there is too much behind me!"

MORAL: There is no pleasing some people.

ANDREW ARMSTRONG.

A COUP DE THEATRE

By Dorothy Canfield

HERBERT CROWELL ran lightly up the broad steps of the veranda to his hostess, waiting to greet him, and exclaimed in his pleasantly fluent manner as he took both her hands in his:

"My dear Eleanor, how good of you to invite me so soon after my arrival! And what a delight to see you looking so radiantly well!"

He delivered these correct remarks with precisely the right intonation of warm but impersonal kindness. Mrs. Hughes drew a sigh of relief. As always, Herbert was master of himself and of the situation. His palpable obliviousness of the contrast between this speech and the last one he had addressed to her, eighteen months ago, had a tranquilizing effect on her apprehensions. She found herself leaning back in her wide wicker chair, listening to his easy, graceful talk of his life abroad with more mental comfort than she had known for months past. She had forgotten how fond she really was of her diplomat cousin and ex-guardian.

From time to time across the pleasant, mellow glow of their talk there struck sharply the remembrance of that extraordinary last scene with him, and the very words of his parting speech whose passionate and wholly unexpected fire had bewildered her ever since: "For the love of God tell me if I can ever do anything . . . make you happier a single instant by the sacrifice of my whole after life. . . ." More effectually than the excitement of her engagement and wedding, more even than the throbbing fever of her love for her husband, did the man himself exorcise his own spell. His long

and unangular leanness as he lounged in the easy-chair, always with his little foreign touch of restraint, his careful toilet, the ready, whimsical smile on his lantern-jawed face, the unconstrained, cool friendliness with which he looked at her from the caverns of his deep-set eyes, the whole aspect of the man of the world, made that last conversation with him quite impossible. It seemed to her remembrance like something she had read in a sensational novel; and indeed, she reflected, it was very probable that the incident was to his self-absorbed, ambitious, impersonal life like a single, foolish, sentimental passage in a dry and sardonic comedy of manners.

At any rate, it was good to see him again, to see somebody quite out of the oppressively close little world of the Summer colony about her. She answered his bantering inquiry with much of her old vivacity.

"Indeed, I shall do nothing of the kind! Tell you, fresh from tipping the balance of world-politics, all about the tiny nothings that make up my life? Never! What do you care about the quarrels of the cottagers over bridge or of the fact that is convulsing us just now that Mrs. Amory has arranged a great dinner-party and dance on the very evening that we have planned the benefit dance at the clubhouse! I don't talk about troubles with servants, for that's not our brand of domesticity, but I'm sunk in it up to the eyes, nevertheless. How does the place strike you . . . though it's true you've been in it such a short time?"

"Ah, that's what we want to know about you. Aunt Elizabeth says she's

as anxious to know how a typical, exclusive American Summer resort impresses you as how the institution of matrimony does. The one's no more strange to you foreign-bred girls than the other. You know she is coming to-morrow?"

"I do, and I am ashamed that you are going to a hotel! The idea that we three are not to be together as in the old times!"

The man shook his head with a mock severity. "You would marry, and now you must take the consequences! I didn't want to be in your way here, and Aunt Elizabeth is so given to running my household that she must do it even in a hotel."

The tone was so light and casual that Mrs. Hughes ventured on: "Ah, what would she do if you should marry?"

Even this the diplomat carried off successfully.

"Oh, I'll never marry. I can't. There would be poor Aunt Elizabeth stranded in America, and she never could endure that. And besides, she couldn't live without me. I don't need a wife while I have such a delightfully clinging vine as she, dependent on my oak-like sturdiness. But how do *you* stand the regular American pendulum-swing from city to mountains . . . or rather the people who do it with you?"

Mrs. Hughes shrugged her pretty shoulders, spreading out helpless hands. "Oh, I haven't the words to describe them. They are entertaining sometimes, and the mountains are, as you see, beautiful." She waved a hand toward the blue walls standing high against the sun, and then with another gesture called attention to more immediate surroundings. "And the house, isn't it a beauty of its kind? Bradley's taste is so sure."

It was the first mention of her husband's name, and though she did not spy upon the man to see its effect, she sharpened her ears to catch the precise intonation of his rejoinder.

"Perfect!" he exclaimed, looking about the dusky, cool veranda, vine-hung and sheltered, which led out to

the garden by a delicious transition of a loggia where the light came through a grapevine. "It has a style all its own . . . no imitation Italian shivering in our cool, Northern sunshine, but really American. And how *is* your husband?"

Mrs. Hughes's answer was as smoothly fluid as his own. "Ah, he's the same lover of all beautiful things. What Aunt Elizabeth is to virtue Bradley is to beauty. He sees nothing but what's lovely . . . he *won't*!"

"An inspiration in these days, even to hear of such a man!" returned the diplomat; and then with a half-paternal warmth, "He must make you very happy, Ellie dear."

"Whom would he not!" she cried, and rose to lead the way into the house.

At the door a servant met them, murmuring that a message had come on the telephone from Mr. Hughes, regretting extremely that he could not return for luncheon, a business appointment kept him with . . . Beyond one short, intaken breath Mrs. Hughes showed no surprise.

"I'm sorry, Herbert," she said, turning to him, "but Bradley said, this morning, he might not be able to get away. He's planning an open-air theatre for one of the Summer colony, and it takes a great deal of time. So we'll just have a quiet time by ourselves, although I expect there'll be a crowd here later on. It is my afternoon at home."

As they sat down to luncheon the man asked carelessly, "And who is so ambitious as to plan for open-air theatres among your bridge-players?"

Mrs. Hughes waited a moment before answering. Indeed, she gave an order to have the shades drawn, and it was obeyed and the room in a semi-twilight before she turned to her companion, who sat admiring the glowing, ardent fulfilment of her girlish promise of beauty. Then, "I do detest a glaring dining-room in Summer, don't you?" she said with an accent which struck the other as oddly overemphasized. "Why, the open-air theatre lady is a Mrs. Cardanne, an old friend

of Bradley's before his marriage. Won't you have something to drink besides mineral water?"

"Mrs. Cardanne?" he cried. "Why, you surprise me! I thought her husband was definitely in the diplomatic service and they were to be abroad the rest of their lives."

"Her husband is dead," said his hostess briefly. "Do try the national deadly drink and have some iced tea." She held up her own tinkling glass and said with a charming gaiety, "Come, die with me!"

In the discreet dusk of the room she was hardly more than a glimmering, graceful shape of white, though he looked at her sharply.

"Why, how long has Cardanne been dead?" he persisted.

She cast her eyes to the ceiling, reckoning absently as one does to bring to mind an insignificant fact. "About a year," she said finally. "Perhaps a little more than a year. I don't seem to remember exactly."

"And Mrs. Cardanne . . . ?" he began, and paused, uncertain as to the form in which he should cast his question.

Eleanor broke in, again with the accent which had first struck so oddly on his trained ear. "Well, what about Mrs. Cardanne? *She* is not dead."

"No, no, of course not. I just wondered what she did when Cardanne died and what she has been doing with herself ever since?"

"She left Buenos Ayres at once and came back to New York, where she spent the Winter, and she has been here in Greenton all Summer. As to what she does with herself, why, very much what the rest of us do, bores herself vastly, I dare say."

"Ah!" said the diplomat, and after considering an instant the echoes of this speech in his inner ear, he turned the conversation back to his own doings, of which he conversed at great length and with his most sprightly vivacity.

II

AFTER they went back into the library callers were announced almost

at once, and the pleasant, book-shadowed room was filled with a heterogeneous gathering to whose chattering talk Crowell listened with less than his usual cool aloofness. He was surprised and a little amused at the deference paid to him. Eleanor had warned him that he was regarded as quite the lion of the Summer, on account of his supposed friendships with various very minor crowned heads. "It's bad enough in New York," she had told him, "but here where we've nothing to do and nobody to talk to but our own provincial selves the arrival of somebody from the great world is really an event."

After the American fashion the company broke up into isolated couples, or at the most three talked together. Crowell smiled to recognize not only this trait of his countrymen, but to observe the way in which two detached youths drifted helplessly in his direction, drawn by the irresistible community of masculine feeling. "Gad! I hate making visits!" observed one. "At least, if you can't have your handsome hostess to yourself."

Crowell regarded them with speculative eyes, considering with the diplomat's unscrupulous economy of men how he might turn them to account. "I'm the one to complain," he said whimsically. "I *had* her to myself before you came."

"Oh, that's easy enough, when she hasn't visitors. Hughes is no watchdog."

"Right you are!" answered the other, with a laugh and lowering his voice. "He's a lapdog."

"How so?" asked Crowell carelessly. "Don't you know him? You seem to know his wife."

"I was her guardian and, with her great-aunt, brought her up, but I was in the Orient when she came to know Hughes, and I've met him only once or twice."

For this incautious betrayal of his relationship he was rewarded by a quick, warning glance between the two and by a careful and concerted silence on their part. They were manifestly ill at

ease and in a few minutes left him to a well-groomed, middle-aged man, upon whom Crowell began a campaign at once more cautious and more bold.

"Is this Mrs. Cardanne I hear so much about the one who was in Paris with her husband when Hughes was in the Beaux-Arts?" he asked. He had a certain manner of inimitable frankness which carried him high over the suspicion of innuendo.

"I don't know, I'm sure," returned the other, wiping his too expansive forehead with a frank consciousness of its baldness, "where they used to know each other, but I understand they were on very good terms before Hughes came back to America, and married Miss Crowell. They certainly are now, at any rate." His own insinuation was so open that it was almost harmless, and he looked knowingly at the other.

"Ah, then that's the one," returned Crowell, nodding his head carelessly as at the solution of one of those trifling problems of identification which beset a man of wide and casual acquaintance-ship.

"Yes, they do say that he married to break her spell, and Mrs. Cardanne—" began the other, when they were startled by hearing the name tossed lightly up in the spray of talk back to them. "It's perfectly, unspeakably lovely!" cried one of the younger women. "Mrs. Cardanne's in ecstasy over it and I am wild to act in the first play given there, if only as a chorus-girl. Up here where there's no bathing a poor girl who *has* pretty knees gets no chance to show them unless she acts. Though I suppose as Mrs. Cardanne's always first in everything that her knees are prettier than mine."

Crowell's companion said under his breath with a savage solemnity, "There *may* be a bigger fool and worse chatterbox than Mollie Martin, but I . . . now listen to her."

A quick, warning glance and the deprecating exclamation, "Oh, Mollie!" had shown the girl that the two men had overheard her remark, but she covered whatever embarrassment she

might be supposed to feel with a flood of superlatives addressed to Mrs. Hughes.

"I should think you'd be too proud of your husband to live! Not only is he the grandest young architect in the States, so everybody says, you needn't deny it, but what I like about him is that he has the darlinest ideas! This outdoor theatre, why, it's the sweetest thing you ever saw! And to see him in it . . . especially if Mrs. Cardanne is there, he so blond and she so dark, you know. . . ."

Crowell rose and walked back of Mrs. Hughes's chair. "Open-air theatres?" he said. "I wonder if any of you know the curious ones they have in the Herrenhausen Gardens at Hanover. I once spent a Summer there and I remember the most delicious episode. . . ." He took the conversation into his own hands, and, not scrupling to interrupt and to monopolize talk, he kept it resolutely on the other side of the ocean.

After the visitors were gone he lingered a moment, lounging and at ease, surveying Mrs. Hughes, who sat opposite him, her back to the light. He fingered a little steel dagger which he took from the pages of an uncut magazine, drawing it between his long fingers with a slow, calm movement. He looked supremely confident of himself and began with a bold confidence in his own judgment.

"Well, Eleanor, how do *you* like Mrs. Cardanne? I used to know her slightly, and I'd be glad to compare impressions."

He stood on guard, manifestly, after this, with watchful eyes on her. His hand closed hard on the sharp blade, but at the first sound of her voice, unconscious and serene, it dropped open, limp, a thin line of red showing along the palm.

Mrs. Hughes put her hands behind her head and reflected. "I think, on the whole, she is the most charming woman I know," she brought out finally, with a hearty note of unforced admiration. "She is really bewitching with that soft, melancholy helplessness

before her own emotion. It makes me want to put my arms about her and comfort her . . . although I dare say she would be very much surprised to know it!" This with a brisk laugh.

Crowell did not sit up in his chair and stare at his hostess as another man might have done—that is, he did not do so to the eye, but, as he furtively pressed his handkerchief against the wound in his hand, he regarded her with an uncertainty which increased as she went on in a tone whose perfect naturalness there was no mistaking. "Of course both Bradley and I are so deeply under obligations to her that it is possible we are not impartial. She has quite made Bradley's fortune by the exquisite discrimination she has shown in the orders she has given him." She looked at the man for a response, and when, caught in his own maze, he hesitated and could produce nothing, she went on: "I believe you have been hearing stories about her already. Don't believe them. She's the most impulsive, warm-hearted woman in the world, that's all, with nothing to hold her steady just now."

She let her smiling eyes rest on his with an unconsciousness which he found dazzling while she went on in a cheerful murmur about their plans, about her husband's unexampled successes, about their smooth-running life. She was ironic at times in the care-free and kindly satiric vein of her girlhood, she was humorously enthusiastic about married life, she was full of affectionate solicitude about his own future. There was not a false intonation, not a breath too much or too little. She looked perhaps more mature, more married than before luncheon, but that was probably because she was now in the open light. As he said good-bye he was particularly struck with the frank, firm clasp of her hand.

As he went down the veranda steps he drew a long breath and looked about him serenely, with a complete return to his usual cool imperturbability. Happening to remember that he had left behind a book which his hostess had promised to lend him, he ran back

across the veranda and stepped into the library through the long window. The room was empty, the book was where he had left it, and he was turning away when his eyes were caught by a small heap of torn rags lying on the floor near his feet. As he fixed his gaze on it he saw that it was the handkerchief which Mrs. Hughes had worn at her belt. He remembered the odd pattern on the border. It was torn into innumerable strips which were in turn torn across into tiny twisted squares. There was a spot of red on one of these. He looked at these scraps for a moment, his face inscrutable, and then leaving them where they lay, he again descended to the gravel road-way. After a dozen steps he stopped short, drawing in a long breath. When he let it out it was almost articulate in a low exclamation, and turning he hastened once more across the veranda into the library. The handkerchief was still there, and picking it up swiftly he laid it inside the book he held. Although the afternoon sun was still hot, he carried his hat absently in his hand until he came to himself with a start upon the main road.

III

On the clubhouse veranda sat Mollie Morton and her crony of the hour, young Darrel Mortimer, very much overcome, both of them, with the importance of the occasion. They were engaging single-handed the renowned Mr. Crowell and his aunt, and they were bent on showing these widely heralded cosmopolitans that conversation is not a lost art in America. Through Mrs. Hughes's sudden headache and inability to lead the party which was to introduce her relatives to the hardwood, Mission-furniture glories of the clubhouse, the young people had been made the guides of the expedition, and they were solemnly aware of their responsibility. Young Mr. Mortimer kept a wary eye out for the right people to introduce, and labored to keep up to the lofty standard of talk dealt out by

his usually so colloquial ally, who on her part did her best at vivacity in the very restricting bonds of a dimly remembered saying that really good conversation does not deal in personalities. Accordingly she unfolded a store of profound philosophical remarks, greatly to the bewilderment of Miss Crowell's elderly placidity.

"It is strange, is it not," she said with inimitable youthful sententiousness, "how little one knows really about the lives of people one is with. Now I know everybody in Greenton, and yet I suppose there are tragedies being enacted in every household that I don't see at all."

"I dare say, I dare say," assented the old lady vaguely, looking about the wide veranda and across the rolling green dunes of the golf course with the unvarying interest in new scenes of the professional globe-trotter.

Mollie looked discouragement at this lack of responsiveness and began on a more moderate level.

"I suppose you are devoted to travel, aren't you, Miss Crowell?"

The picturesque old maid flashed into vivacity. "To travel and to my nephew! The two go together!" She gave him a look almost like a sweetheart's. "You know we have lived and traveled together always. That is my life."

"Suppose he should marry?" put in young Mortimer, bringing the conversation down to personalities so that his partner blushed for his crudity.

"I should be the most forsaken and desolate old woman in the world," returned Miss Crowell promptly, with a care-free lightness. "However, I'm safe. He's not the marrying kind."

Crowell smiled absently at this and then roused himself suddenly at the sight of the bald-headed man whose acquaintance he had made at Mrs. Hughes's the afternoon before. He rose, excused himself, and went across to join him.

"Oh, Mr. Eldon—the name is Eldon, is it not?—won't you show me the trophy-room of the club? I've heard so much about the arrangement

for the cups." As the two moved away he said, "It was designed by Hughes, wasn't it?"

The other nodded. "Clever fellow," he commented. "Too clever!"

"How do you mean?" asked the diplomat.

"Oh, I don't know," returned the other, sheering away from psychological subtleties with the instinctive movement of the Anglo-Saxon.

"Come, I'd really like to know," persisted Crowell. "I've been out of America so much that I feel the keenest interest in American types, and how can I learn anything about them except through getting the opinions of intelligent men? Do you mean he's so clever as to be unscrupulous?"

Mr. Eldon expanded a little under this carefully considered speech and seemed to propose to himself seriously the problem of making a worthy answer.

"No, not that." He stopped and ran his hand into his pocket, meditatively. "No, I dare say I don't mean that he's too clever at all, but that he has too much temperament. The United States is a dangerous place for a man with too much temperament, unless he goes into politics." He chuckled over the blankness of the other at this thrust at the affairs of his native land, and explained: "Why, I mean that Hughes's convictions change according to his surroundings. If you have him with you, all to yourself, why, you *have* him, don't you know. But if he gets loose and somebody else is with him, why, then the last man's influence is all-powerful—or, rather, the woman's . . ."

Crowell's hands shut hard, and he broke in, his voice choked, "Oh, then he's . . ."

The other interposed hastily. "No, no! That's downright malicious. I do him an injustice in saying that. He's not at all a bad sort. I dare say he's really quite devoted to his pretty wife, only—confound it, I can't say what I mean. Why, he's . . . why, I *tell* you, the present mix-up is only one of those damned old attachments;

don't you know how they're the very devil for a man with too many nerves to break away from? He was all right till she turned up a widow, only three months after his own marriage. That would be calculated to give any man a jolt, don't you know?"

He spoke with the ready assumption of one man of the world to another that all gossip is common property and that it is foolish delicacy not to speak of what everybody knows.

"And the lady?" queried Crowell, turning one of the silver cups around and reading the inscription. His attention to the talk was obviously perfunctory, and Eldon made his answer vague, with a grateful relief at being no longer required to analyze.

"Oh, she's just a widow, a lovely young widow, floating around loose, with nothing to occupy her mind. They're a dangerous element in society, and . . . Isn't that a superb cup! That's been won by the members of one family right along and here's another that . . ."

"I'm afraid I can't look at any more just at present," said the other. "Come back with me and let me introduce you to my aunt."

The decisiveness of this speech was almost peremptory, and Eldon found himself bowing to the little group before he had time to pull down his waistcoat.

They were still conversing on dizzily lofty and abstract topics, and the girl wore an air of fatigued triumph as she brought out, evidently in answer to some objection, "But wouldn't true love be willing to sacrifice anything, even one's own goodness and virtue?"

Miss Crowell cut short the youthful solemnity of this with a brisk laugh. "I'm afraid, my dear, that as you grow older you will find people are a great deal readier to sacrifice their own goodness than some other things. For instance, I would sacrifice for my great-niece anything in the world, whatever goodness I have with the rest, but not my nephew. Him I must have. You'll find that there's always something that

folks aren't willing to give up, even in their most exalted moods."

"Quite right," joined in Mr. Eldon. "I'd let my goodness go in a minute, for lots of people, but not my health."

"How about sacrificing other people to aid the one you're going to help?" asked young Mr. Mortimer, spurred to philosophy by a burning look of reproach from Mollie.

"Oh, while you are about it, do it up brown," said Eldon easily.

Crowell roused himself from meditation and said at random, "I quite agree with you."

"No, you don't either!" contradicted his aunt. "You don't know what you're talking about. There is something you'd never give up for anybody."

"And what is that, old soothsayer?"

"Why, your personal honesty, to be sure. Not to save the world would you allow a relation that was false between yourself and someone close to you."

"Oh, well, *that*!" cried Eldon. "That's Tophet, you know, to have to lie with every breath you draw. Nobody ought to expect you to do that!"

Crowell made no comment, and his aunt tossed back defiantly, "A great many women do that and are praised for it!"

"Ah, women!" exclaimed the other, almost as pleased with his contributions to this profound discussion as Mollie herself. "Who ever knows what women are feeling? That's why it's always allowable not to act on what they say, they wear such masks! If one could ever be really sure of them, if one only knew when they were in distress, we would all spring to the rescue."

"I think I shall let that gallant remark serve as valedictory," Miss Crowell rose as she said this, "and take my weary old bones to a siesta."

After they had gone Mollie and Darrel surveyed each other in speechless satisfaction with themselves.

"Now I suppose that is real 'salon' conversation," said the girl, with a sigh of success.

IV

GREENTON was as amazed as it was delighted by the ardor with which the distinguished Mr. Crowell threw himself into its Summer pursuits. He gave up his other visits in America and announced that he would stay the Summer out among the New Hampshire mountains. He was usually reported to be a man much given to a contemplation suspected to be sardonic, and of an over-sophisticated presence very daunting to the ordinary attempts of ordinary people to amuse themselves. But at this period his redoubtable knowledge of the world showed itself only in the extraordinary ease with which he made himself at once a firmly established factor in the life of the little Summer resort trying feverishly not to relapse into the bored listlessness natural to it. He golfed, he rode horseback, played bridge, motored, lunched and paid indefatigable visits, and so far succeeded in disproving his reputation that people were not too surprised when he decided to take part in the open-air theatricals given under Mrs. Cardanne's wide oaks.

When this was announced at a luncheon given by Mrs. Hughes the eyes of the hostess were the only ones to widen in surprise, but she made no comment. Indeed, she was very silent on most occasions of late. Old Miss Crowell lingered after the other guests were gone.

"Let me stay a while, Eleanor, and pretend you are a little girl again. Herbert and I miss our little girl very much. You seem quite grown-up and far away from us nowadays."

Mrs. Hughes smiled, but said nothing, leaning her head back against the chair as though she found the Summer heat a little tiring. The two sat for a moment in silence, and then the other yielded to a sudden impulse for speech.

"Eleanor, why don't you trust Herbert!" she leaned forward and put her soft, wrinkled old hand pleadingly on the younger woman's smooth, rounded arm. "He's always been your friend; you know there is nothing he would not do for you . . .

why do you shut him so far away from . . .?"

Eleanor interrupted with a readiness so instant as almost to make it seem she anticipated this remonstrance.

"Aunt Elizabeth, it's Herbert's fault. I feel sometimes that he has quite lost the old instinctive delicacy we prized in him. He doesn't seem to feel. Why, he should know that no friend can be so close to a woman after she is married! Herbert looks at me so sharply that I feel as though he were spying on me."

Her voice rose to a slight accent of resentment on the last words, but she still drooped heavily in her chair. Miss Crowell was about to speak again, but was cut short by the arrival of the subject of their talk, bringing with him, as usual, three or four of his talkative, loudly-laughing new acquaintances. He had just left Eleanor's husband, he explained, at the clubhouse. He seemed to feel it necessary to explain why they were not together, and indeed he had shown the greatest assiduity in making friends with the young architect, and passed much of his time in his company.

The newcomers dropped into chairs with exaggerated protestations of fatigue. They had been helping Mrs. Cardanne supervise the finishing touches on the theatre, they said, and lavished expressions of praise upon themselves for their success. Mrs. Hughes's air of enervated listlessness increased and she began to fan herself languidly. Mollie Martin's babbling tongue led the conversation of a group of young people, while to his aunt and cousin Crowell talked of everything in his gayest vein, and finally to the company in general.

"A big piece of news came out in the conversation today. Mrs. Cardanne has bought a site in New York, and the plans for the house are to be given to Mr. Hughes."

Mrs. Hughes held the fan before her eyes to shut out a sudden ray of sunlight which penetrated the shutter. Crowell moved the curtain so that the room was again in twilight, but she did not lower the fan. Miss Crowell

asked: "Ah, then she's to make New York her permanent home? I should have thought so cosmopolitan a creature would have preferred Paris or London."

Eleanor proffering no comment on this, Crowell advanced with: "It seems it is really Mr. Hughes's doings. I gather from what they said that he's the apostle who's been preaching true Americanism to her."

At this Mollie Martin fused the two groups by exclaiming: "Well, I should say he *was*! If he'd argued with me to go to Patagonia the way I overheard him once urging her to stay in New York, I'd have taken the next steamer for South America . . . Patagonia is in South America, isn't it?"—this last appeal with a dazzling flash of mirth at her own ignorance, addressed to the young men about her.

Crowell looked at his aunt appealingly, and with some laughing pretext she led the others away to a table on the veranda piled with magazines. The length of the room only separated them from the two she had left, their laughter and gay talk rang in the air as clearly as though they were still present, but the man's intense concentration on his companion seemed to isolate her in a little world of his own making.

He bent toward the silent figure in the chair, her face still hidden by the fan. Even as he looked she laid this screen slowly down as though she disdained its shelter, and turned her face resolutely and full upon him. At the sight he shrank back, crying in a choking voice, in a sort of ecstasy of astonished pain, "*Good God! Eleanor!*"

She surveyed him in a somber resentment.

"Well, you have been trying and trying to make it impossible for me to conceal it from you. Now you have forced me beyond my strength. Are you satisfied?"

Her words did not seem to add to the incredulous agony of his gaze upon her. "Why, Eleanor, why, my poor little Ellie . . ."

He sat down heavily, like an old man. His face was so pale that it shone in the

glimmering shadows of the darkened room. The woman's pose of careless abandon did not change, but at her childish name the stormy heaving of her breast presaged an outburst. She sat up and looked at him speechlessly. The hard misery of her eyes melted into a pathetic and frightened appeal for sympathy. She laid her hand on her heart with a gesture so eloquent of her torment that the man winced and sickened as at a thrust in his own flesh. She looked as she had when a little girl and had run to him with some childish tragedy.

"I . . . I cannot . . . I cannot *have* it so, Herbert!" she said in a passionate whisper. "Not another Winter like the last! I can't!"

The man's face whitened still more. He rose, trembling violently, and walked stumblingly toward her. She drew back, terrified at the ungovernable fury in his eyes. He tried to speak, but no words came. Finally as his arm was raised in a gesture of furious menace, she sprang up, quivering with a new fear.

"No, no . . . Herbert, you shall not hate him so . . . and if you ever hurt him . . . I love him . . . I love him . . ."

Her whispered, incoherent words beat him back, and he stood, repulsed, shivering like a man in a fit. As he swayed forward she screamed in horror, and the startled merrymakers on the veranda, rushing in, found him lying face down, and Eleanor shrinking away from his twitching hand where it lay, flung wide in his fall, close against her skirt.

V

MR. CROWELL's heat-prostration did not interfere with his activities during the next weeks. His thin face was very pale and he admitted frankly that he did not sleep well, but his indisposition but added to his popularity. It was an amiable enough trait in a man so distinguished, so wealthy, with every possible claim to be rightfully supercilious, that he was willing to take

seriously the life of an American Summer resort, but to go on doing so when he was manifestly not in good physical condition was complimentary to the cottagers of Greenton to the last degree. It gave luster to their doings in their own eyes to have them of such obvious importance to this much traveled and discriminating person. Mollie Martin said that it made her feel like a born duchess to have him open the door for her to pass.

The one voice absent from this self-congratulatory chorus was Mrs. Hughes's, and a rumor, explanatory of this, soon started. It was evident that she and her cousin were not on good terms; someone hinted that the quarrel was over money matters and dated from the time when she was still his ward. In a few days a continuous and consistent explanation and narrative was in everyone's mouth, complete in detail even down to the amount involved. Sympathy was all with Mr. Crowell, and it was said that Mrs. Hughes evidently felt herself to be in the wrong from the persistence with which she avoided meeting people, keeping strictly to her own house and garden.

Even old Miss Crowell, vaguely uneasy, was forced to seek her there, and found her receiving a visit from Mollie Martin, who was rattling away and discharging in floods her most inspired indiscretions.

"It's too bad you are not feeling well these days, Eleanor—and I must say you do look pale!—for I never knew Greenton to be so entertaining. I've been out five seasons and I never knew anything like the delicious, lovely excitement over Mrs. Cardanne's theatricals. It's as if everybody in Greenton was a *débutante*, and had never seen a thing, we're so full of it. You've simply got to come to that." She waited for a response, but Mrs. Hughes was turned away to put a book back on a shelf. "Oh, now, Eleanor, don't say you can resist that! Why, your husband is the most beautiful object in his Pierrot costume you ever saw! And of all the Columbines, Mrs.

Cardanne is the sweetest! But your cousin is the star when it comes to acting! We had dress rehearsal today, and it just made me goose-flesh all over to see his Harlequin making love to Columbine. He's wonderful! I envy Mrs. Cardanne having two such men to act with . . . but I haven't anything to complain of! You ought to see my costume!"

Miss Crowell asked with a touch of malice, "Does it show your knees?" and upon the girl's enthusiastic assurance that it did, she said gravely to her niece that that in itself was sufficient inducement for going. They both angled palpably for information on this point. Finally, Eleanor satisfied their curiosity with a careless scorn.

"No, I'm not going, if that's what you want to know. I've been having a series of my neuralgic headaches, and to be out so late in the evening . . ."

The girl rose, with an open air of having compassed the object of her visit.

"Well, I'm awfully sorry for you, poor dear, and I tell you what I'll do. I'll come in tomorrow and tell you all about everything. Yes, I know your husband is to be there, but men never see anything!"

After her chattering exit the other two sat in silence, frankly constrained, both of them disdaining the shelter of small-talk. Mrs. Hughes wandered about the room with a weary restlessness, looking at her own pictures and books as fixedly as though she saw them for the first time. The older woman sat still and looked fixedly at her. Finally she said:

"I don't complain, Eleanor, of being kept far off from you, you've probably some foolish and exaggerated idea of married life that makes you act so for the present, but what have I done that Herbert should be lost to me also? What have you done to him?"

Mrs. Hughes sat down suddenly as though she had just realized that she was very tired. "I don't know what you mean, Aunt Elizabeth. I am not keeping Herbert away either from you or me. I have not even seen him since

that time when he . . . that hot day . . ."

"Yes, I know when!" impatiently.

"He has avoided me absolutely since then. I don't know why." She spoke listlessly, but the old woman's answer was trembling with a sudden rush of emotion. "Ah, it's all very well for you who have a husband to take it so lightly, but I to whom he is all, now that you are gone? It's horrible of him."

"Why, what has he done to you?"

"Just what he has to you! He had his things taken away to another hotel the day after that attack and I've not even seen him since then. I seem to be in a bad dream." She looked at her niece, her eyes suffused. The humility of the appeal for sympathy went for nothing. Eleanor's eyes returned her gaze, unseeing in their wretchedness. The other went on drearily: "It's so unlike anything one could have dreamed of from Herbert. If I could only have him with me for a day I feel that I could set things right, but when one cannot even see him . . ."

The form of this last sentence seemed to ring loud in Eleanor's ears. She looked at the old woman with the hard selfishness of extreme misery which can feel only its own pain.

"I have not seen Bradley except at the table for three weeks," she said with a curious effect of detachment from her words. It was as though her capacity for silence were exhausted and she were but suffering aloud. Indeed she seemed scarcely to know that she had spoken and repelled with impatient resentment the impulsive movement of the other toward her.

Miss Crowell's face had changed at the words of her niece to an utter forgetfulness of self. She glowed in a sort of despairing tenderness, and without heeding the outstretched arms thrusting her back, she took the pale, rigid young creature into a close embrace.

"I don't know what you mean, dear Ellie, but you're not happy, and I'm the nearest approach to a mother that you have."

Mrs. Hughes's self-control broke. Her breath came in long gasps, but she still fought for a calm that was within her reach no longer.

"It's nothing, Aunt Elizabeth. I'm just tired and worn out from the hot Summer. I have notions . . . Fancy your cool, level-headed Eleanor with notions!" She tried to smile, and the attempt thrust an arrow through the other's heart. "I have the strangest presentiments about this—about these theatricals. It's foolish, but I feel somehow as though something . . . something were going to happen tonight." Her breath was almost gone and her face already drawn like a weeping child's, but she went on brokenly, "I'll just humor myself and sit up till Bradley is safely home again . . ."

The old lady cut her short. "And I shall stay with you, unless you set the servants on me to turn me out!"

She tightened her embrace till there was something fierce in it, and at the touch Eleanor's tense body relaxed. She broke into pitiful outcries, clinging helplessly to the old woman, who gazed over her head, facing with a bewildered anger an enemy she could not see.

VI

THE morning after Mrs. Cardanne's theatricals Miss Crowell awoke with a heavy heart. For a moment she could not remember how she came to be in her niece's guest-chamber, and when she did recall the dreary vigil of the night before a wave of nausea swept over her at the thought of rising and beginning another day like it. She lay for a moment, trying to rally her courage, when a silken rustle in the room made her open her eyes. At the sight of Eleanor, fully dressed and looking fixedly out of the window, she knew that no delay was possible—that the day had already begun. With an effort she roused herself and sat up. "Well?" she asked dully. Eleanor answered in the same accent. They both recognized the other's as being the same

with which they had bidden each other good night after their interminable evening of waiting. "Bradley did not come home at all. He is not here, and I think something must have happened. I am afraid to ask." She did not seem at all moved, only quite exhausted.

"What time is it?" asked Miss Crowell practically, beginning to dress herself.

"It is half-past ten. I thought I would not wake you, we waited up so long last night." In answer to a look she added, "No, I didn't go to bed at all. I kept on waiting."

The other woman remembered the horrors of the endless expectancy of the night before and shuddered.

As they descended the stairs, a silent, drooping couple, they were set upon by a fluttering apparition, clicking high heels and flashing brilliant teeth at them.

"There! I knew I'd never get hold of you if I went to the door and asked to see you, you've grown so unsociable of late, so I just crept up on the veranda and slipped in through the open window and lay in wait for you. Now go right ahead with whatever you were going to do, and I'll just follow you around and tell you all about it."

Miss Crowell was the first to rally. "Well, my dear, I was just going to have breakfast. Come into the breakfast-room and talk there if you like."

Eleanor turned with some wild impulse of flight, but the girl bore down on her gaily, and swept her along to the table.

"Now then," she observed triumphantly, planting her chair before her prisoner's, "now then, tell me first, have you heard anything about it?"

Eleanor looked helplessly at Miss Crowell, who said lightly, "We were such lazy-bones about getting up this morning that you're the first person we've seen."

The girl gave a bounce of delight. "Why, then I am the reporter who scoops you, if that's the way you say it. Or else I scoop the performance. Anyway, I'm the first to tell you the news. Now let me begin at the beginning."

In the quiet, sunny room her breathless, over-accentuated talk rang loud and shrill. Miss Crowell ate her breakfast soberly with the desperate practicality of the old who know the tragical preëminence of physical necessities, and cast her tired old eyes alternately upon the ruddy, sun-browned face of the girl and the transparent pallor of her niece. Mrs. Hughes made no pretense of listening to the report. She sat turned away from the girl, in a stiff high-backed chair, but the utter abandon of her body could not have been greater if she had been lying insensible on the floor. The older woman contrasted this with her frantic tension of expectancy of the night before, and sighed heavily in an attempt to decide which of the two moods was the more distressing to see.

The preoccupation of the two grew patent even to the self-absorbed youth of their visitor. "I don't believe you are listening to a word I'm saying," she pouted. "Did you even hear that about how superbly Mr. Crowell acted when he got Columbine to leave Pierrot and elope with him? He just swept her down as though he were on fire! Gracious! She couldn't any more have gone! It was the grandest thing I ever saw, and then of course the announcement coming right after the curtain . . . well, it was just like something in the most ripping novel you ever read."

Miss Crowell roused herself to some decent show of interest. "The announcement?" she queried absently, buttering her toast, "and what did they announce?"

"Oh, my goodness gracious!" shouted Mollie. "Why, haven't you even heard *that*? Well, I do scoop you! Why, the engagement of Mr Crowell and Mrs. Cardanne, to be sure! Did you ever hear of anything so romantic! People just gasped for a minute and then burst out applauding as if it was some more of the play. Mr Crowell announced it himself, you know, while he was still in his Harlequin costume, and then he darted back into the flies and dragged Mrs. Cardanne out with him to bow to the audience."

The girl was silent a moment, reviewing inwardly the scene before she burst out again: "I never saw such pretty acting as they did! She pretended she didn't want to come at all, and pulled back and tried to get away, and she looked sort of scared, as though she were a girl hearing her engagement spoken of instead of a widow. But Harlequin put his arm right around her, and held her there and looked just thunderbolts of pretend masterfulness at her . . . oh, he's a *wonderful* actor! He really ought to go on the stage. But she's as good as he! Finally they stood hand in hand and Mrs. Cardanne was the sweetest thing! She did not bow or anything, just cast her eyes down as if she was all overcome, and put on that little way she has . . . you know how fascinating she is when she looks as if she was just going to cry!" She appealed to the older woman, Mrs. Hughes's face being still averted from her. Miss Crowell settled the laces at her withered wrists and drank from her water-glass before she asked drily, "And then what?"

Mollie cried out in reproach of her ungrateful stoicism. "Why, I don't believe you are a bit excited about it!" and then with a sudden reflection, "But of course I forgot, Mr. Crowell must have told you about it before, since he's gone away already. Isn't it too bad that he has to hurry so to get things arranged in Washington before his wedding?"

Something of the old lady's pale dismay penetrated even through her heartless, youthful high spirits. "Of course it is hard on you, isn't it, to have him marry, but he said you had a lovely old home up in Maine somewhere you could go to."

Miss Crowell's stricken silence having no significance for her, she went on reassured, "But I bet you don't know that Mrs. Cardanne has gone with him, do you?" At a dumb negative from the other she continued triumphantly, "Well, there's *one* thing I can tell you disappointing people, anyhow! Yes, she left with him on the first train for

the city, and I should think she would! If I was going to be married on the first of next month I couldn't get to the dressmaker's fast enough! Though they say the wedding's to be *very* quiet, and they start for Constantinople that very afternoon. Oh, I think it's lovely to be so cosmopolitan as they are! They made no more of deliberately planning to be away from America all their lives! Mr. Crowell was saying all around that they probably wouldn't be back here for ten years at least. It made me feel like a member of a village sewing society!" The clock behind her began to strike, and she looked at its face with a wild surprise. "Don't tell me it's twelve! Why, I promised to meet Darrel Mortimer at the clubhouse at half-past eleven." She began to run down the room, calling over her shoulder, "Oh, and I've such lots to tell you; you haven't heard a word about the electric-lighted ice-cream, nor the excitement over Mr. Crowell's having a kind of fainting fit like the one he had here, that hot day, nor—oh, I *must* . . ." She came back a few steps. "Oh, I *must* tell you what that hateful Dupré girl said about my costume . . ." She looked at the clock again, hesitated and then with one plunge disappeared through the open door.

In the quiet, sunny room there was a long silence. Miss Crowell sat quite still and gazed down at her wrinkled old hands, which were trembling. She did not look at her niece, but she felt electrically aware that the inert body in the tall chair was changed to a presence thrillingly alive. After a pause she ventured a glance across the table and was rewarded by a look so profoundly unconscious of her existence, so utterly absorbed in some fierce inner contemplation, that it was almost like a blow. The veins at the temples stood out swollen upon the transparent skin and a hurried pulse throbbed visibly.

A housemaid coming to the door spoke twice before she made her presence noted.

"Oh, Mrs. Hughes," she insisted. "if you please, Mr. Hughes . . ."

Eleanor turned to her, quivering, with a shocked sudden attention as though the maid's drab and conventional aspect were that of a messenger of life and death. "Yes, yes, Mr. Hughes. . . .?" she cried, her voice breaking.

"Mr. Hughes sent me to say, please, ma'am, that he is not feeling at all well this morning and he would be very much obliged if you would come to him."

Mrs. Hughes sprang to her feet. "Why does he not come to me?"

The maid hesitated, looking deprecatingly at Miss Crowell.

"If you please, ma'am, he said please to excuse him that he didn't, but he didn't feel at all well, and he would like to have you quite to himself, he said, ma'am."

"How can I . . . where . . .?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, he is upstairs in your room, ma'am. He has come back."

There was an instant's headlong rush across the room and then the two left faced each other silently. The maid hesitated a moment and then said with respectful kindness, "Can't I do something for you, Miss Crowell?"

"Eh?" asked the other, looking up blindly, one hand at her throat.

"Can't something be done for you? You don't look well," persisted the servant.

Miss Crowell drew a long breath and looked down at her trembling hands. Then, "No," she said slowly, "no, I think you can't help me. It won't last long, thank you."



THE BETTER GIFT

By Gertrude Mercia Wheelock

"O LOVE, if thou must go," the woman cried,
With trembling lips and lashes blindly wet,
"Take what thou wilt from out my life beside,
But leave with me the power to forget."

"I grant thy wish, and go," Love softly said,
And smiled to see the rapture in her eyes,
As swift she turned—she whose poor heart had bled—
To find again youth's golden paradise.

But soon she sought the path where Love had fled,
And cried to him, "One plea I make again:
Grant not that I forget, but give instead
Full memory of thy touch, with all its pain!"



AN auto is good so far as it goes.

AN APRIL SONG

By Edward W. Barnard

IT is June in some far land,
Radiant June among whose roses
Lovers wander hand in hand
While each step new bliss discloses.
On some sea the Summer cheers,
Summer cloudless and delicious;
Summer—not a time of tears,
Coward blades and skies capricious.
Were I there I might go down
To the surf with coy Chiquita!
Ah! but I would rather drown
In the April rain with Rita.

On a lantern-litten shore
Blossoms bright and breezes gentle
Weave across its orchard floor
Carpets rich and oriental.
Rhododendron avenues
Hang out red and purple arras
Matchless as to web and hues
In the great bazaars of Paris.
Were I there I might sip tea
With the geisha Japonita!
Ah! but I would rather be
In the April rain with Rita.

Once when I was fever's thrall
In a *pueblo* under Cancer,
I—love then seemed all in all—
Learned to love a dusky dancer.
Often since when pale suns burned,
Impotent in skies a-glower,
Like an exile I have yearned
For that bright, if arid, bower.
But today I'm happy here
(Ah, forgive me, dear Pepita!)
Walking till the skies shall clear
In the April rain with Rita.

THE IMPERATIVE MOOD

By Robert Adger Bowen

SHE had arrived only the night before from the South, the rural South, and the relief that her cousins had experienced in finding her, if not fashionable, at least distinctive in her appearance was causing them to undergo a kindly reaction. Unknown cousins who write suddenly that they are coming on to see you for an indefinite stay are at any rate more to be preferred if they are nicely dressed. At the present moment, however, Lucia was wearing one of Mildred's bathing-suits, her dark hair surmounted by a crimson silk handkerchief, her eyes, shy at the unaccustomed dress, lustrous beneath their long lashes. The three girls were sitting a little apart from the crowd of bathers and those who, not intending to go into the surf, sat looking on from under the mushroom protection of beach umbrellas. They had walked down to the bathing lines from their own exclusive piece of beach in front of their house that they might see the holiday crowd and the usual habitués disport themselves. Even as she spoke Mildred turned her head slightly the better to observe a human pyramid that was building itself up near them of six scantily clad and athletic young fellows. A little beyond, the beach fool was winning his usual plaudits for his antics.

"But, Lucia," Miss Poinsett was saying, "it is really unthinkable—that in these days such medieval ideas should exist. I'd like to see anyone try to make me marry a man just because he was a man and I a girl!"

Lucia Prioleau smiled, and when Lucia smiled you wondered why you had thought her mouth the loveliest

thing ever in its wistful repose. And when she spoke you forgot even her mouth in the lilting cadences of her voice.

"At least, now you will understand why I invited myself here. I knew you and Beatrice would, just as soon as I could explain. I simply could not stay at home and let Joe Wetherell come back to find me there a part of this odious plot against us both."

The younger of Lucia's cousins shifted her position in the sand that she might see the face of this girl who, in the twentieth century, had thus to flee the approach of a prospective bridegroom.

"I wouldn't have done it," she cried suddenly. "You say you have never seen Mr. Wetherell since he was a little boy. How do you know you are not running away from a treasure in husbands?"

"I can't conceive of an unwilling husband being any sort of a treasure," Lucia returned, her gaze on the sea, "even if he were so otherwise, and this one positively abhors the thought of me. What man wouldn't of a girl picked out for him by interested relatives? Ever since I came back from my French convent he has managed, through one excuse and another, to dodge meeting me—five full years. He's really been very ingenious, the way he has managed, but now he is through with his protracted course at Yale, and must return to see his aunts who have done everything for him—even to supplying me."

"It is a most extraordinary situation," returned the first Miss Poinsett. She rose to her feet, shaking the hot,

dry sand from her short skirts, and looked toward the surf, dotted almost as thickly as the beach itself with humanity, the shallow waters full of children and stout matrons, the lines black with timid girls and more adventurous old ladies, the surf itself alive with jumping, somersaulting, screaming, variously disporting bodies of young people, while out beyond the lifelines, closely watched by the burnished guard upon his white catamaran, swam the more expert. The other guard on shore stood, bronzed and superbly athletic, in the ankle-deep rippling water. Her eyes falling upon him, Miss Poinsett observed to her sister:

"There is your handsome sun god, Beatrice, more statuesque than ever."

The younger Miss Poinsett scrambled to her feet.

"Isn't he too wonderful for anything!" she exclaimed with unabashed enthusiasm. "What a pity he is only a life-guard!"

Lucia rose also, her eyes following the glances of her companions. A lovely color mantled her cheeks as she looked about her.

"It seems to me," she observed, after a moment, "that everyone has on less than another." Then her glance strayed to the life-guard. "I never saw a man so nearly just Adam before. I think he is horrid!"

"Oh! you will get used to that," her younger cousin assured her. "And our Antinous saves somebody from drowning almost every day. He really should have a string of medals across his chest."

"It might piece his costume some," Lucia assented demurely. She was feeling very ill at ease in her own abbreviated dress, but she followed her cousins across the sands, as they moved down toward the water. "I think your hero awfully stuck-up looking, Mildred," she observed.

Miss Poinsett laughed.

"Beatrice claims him. She has all sorts of interesting theories about him. Ask her."

Lucia paused at the edge of the sea in

sudden misgiving. She was not afraid, but it struck her, at sight of the densely filled surf, that it was not exactly desirable to enter the water. A large wave washed the jellyfish body of a bald-headed man almost to her feet, and spun it around. The girl stepped quickly aside with a little shudder of distaste.

"I'm not going in," she cried. "It looks horrid—just like a lot of insects being drowned!"

Her cousins pleaded in vain. Lucia was used to holding her own against combined assault, and she did so now.

"Maybe I'll come in after a while," she conceded finally, "but I'm not going now."

The girls left her at that, for the lure of the waves was strong within their Summer blood, and beautiful rollers beckoned to them just beyond the densest crowds. Lucia, realizing with sudden painful keenness that she was standing alone before the assembled beach, turned hastily, and blindly sought to efface herself on the sands. A nicely coiled pile of rope with a circular life-preserver leaning against it offered an inviting support for her back.

She felt very uncomfortable, however, and suddenly very lonely. She could not discover her cousins in the mass of bobbing heads and bodies in the water, and the thought of being alone among all these people about her, and clad as she was, made her face crimson. What funny things her cousins did for their pleasures! And what queer things they said! They were vain of their sunburned arms and tanned faces. Lucia looked upon her own white skin, showing now a deceitful pinkish tint that was to be a part of the price she was to pay for her exposure to sun and air. She liked her cousins, though, and they had met her beautifully. What she would have done without this refuge of their home she did not know. The bare magnitude of the move had silenced her father's opposition, whereas he would never have allowed her to absent herself from home at any near-by place. She frowned as she thought of her

father's designs to effect her marriage to their young neighbor.

"I shall have to ask you to move just a little," said a rich voice in her ear. "I hate to trouble you."

Lucia jumped. Turning, she tilted her head upward to encounter bent upon her own the bluest eyes she had ever seen in a human face. She did not at all understand the spoken words.

"I'm awfully sorry," said the voice again, "but you are sitting against the lifeline."

Then she blushed crimson. Bending over her, his hand upon the coil of rope behind her, stood the burnished guard. To Lucia it seemed that he was composed of copper-hued flesh, dazzling teeth and those vividly blue eyes. She was vaguely conscious of dark hair above them surmounted by a skull-cap of blue that matched the eyes. Something like an electric current emanated from his person as he bent over so close to her. She drew herself away hurriedly, and the young man stood erect. Lucia wished he would take his startling frankness of costume out of her sight. At the same moment she became subtly aware that they two were the cynosure of a thousand pair of eyes as the beach crowd watched its hero with a piqued curiosity.

When he had stepped back to his former post, and Lucia saw for the first time how near it was to her own, she became unreasonably angry with her cousins for leaving her. She could see the yellow turban that crowned Mildred's dark hair bobbing far out beyond the breaking billows, and Beatrice was near it, both oblivious of her. She disliked to move from her place with the eyes of all those people to watch her, yet she felt miserably conspicuous sitting there. An unlogical anger burned within her against the guard. What harm had she been doing to the wretched rope, anyway, that he should have presumed to order her off! Doubtless his head was so turned with his own petty importance that he could not resist the opportunity to be officious. He looked cocky. The recollection of that peculiar influence that she had

detected in his near presence made her flash a defiant glance in his direction, and she caught squarely his eyes with her own as she did so. That quite decided her.

She rose, hot with indignation, the crowd behind and about her completely forgotten, and stepped daintily down to the water's edge. She did not pause there, but walked in.

Now there is a knack in doing all things, even in walking into the sea, and Lucia had never set foot in the sea before nor knew any of that monster's innate deceitfulness even at his most innocent verge. And that day he was not so innocent even there, and a vicious little undertow swirled about Lucia's knees and, as she stepped unwittingly into a slight depression, tilted her from her balance. She sprang erect immediately, but the incident did not go to please her. The next moment a foamy rush of water meeting her face to face spun her around giddily, after completely drenching all but her hair. Still she was not yet in waist deep, and she intended to join her cousins. She went boldly on, the water suddenly mounting up to her breast. Then, for the first time, Lucia had a suspicion that it might be well to go more slowly. She turned her face toward the shore. It seemed very far away, but far as it was her glance at once fell upon the figure of the life-guard standing well out before the other people on the beach, gleaming bronze save for the whiteness of his scant attire.

The next moment Lucia felt herself lifted from her feet, overturned, and submerged, revolved like a Catherine wheel along the surface of the ground, and swept, so it seemed to her, an interminable distance out to sea under a volume of roaring, scething, blinding black water. As a matter of fact she was carried far inshore, where, struggling to her feet, a second wave bowled her over, swept her first farther inward and then drew her back with horrid rapidity and force. It was then that she became aware of a strong arm about her, and of her body being held erect

while her own arms clutched frantically the sinuous, lithe form of her deliverer. She could not see or hear, and she was held so tightly and firmly that the water, almost submerging her, could not unsteady her by its force. She gave a little sob of frightened relief once she fairly caught her breath.

"Are you better?" she then heard someone ask. "There is no danger at all, now, but you should not have come out here all alone." Some indefinable quality of tenderness in the voice struck her even then.

She forced her eyes open to find herself held tightly against the wet body of the life-guard, her own arms thrown about him, his face bent to hers in undoubted solicitude. She struggled in his arms, pushing him from her with her hands upon his chest. When she was free she looked at him with flashing eyes.

"Oh!" she cried. "You!"

He colored darkly under the rich tan, for the scorn in her voice stung. Then an amused smile lit his face and vanished slowly in the glow of his eyes.

"At least come out of the water until your friends join you," he pleaded. "I am sorry to have been so officious, but I am here, paid, to be so."

Something in his tones even more than the words themselves rebuked her, but she held her small head high in proud resentment. Nevertheless, she moved on with him through the swirling water toward the shore. She noticed then that the entire beach had risen to its feet to witness her rescue—that those about them in the water stood watching with amused and interested looks. The realization of this made Lucia color vividly.

"Won't you leave me?" she cried impatiently. "It seems I have made a sufficient spectacle of myself already—thanks to you."

She knew it was basely ungenerous, but she was burning with humiliation. She might not have said it, perhaps, had he not looked so supremely satisfied with what he had done. She, at least, was not going to heroize him.

"I am sorry if I have annoyed you,"

he returned. "You will be quite safe here," and dropping behind her, he cut diagonally across to where the catamaran, with the other guard, hungry for his lunch, was making the shore through the rapidly roughening surf.

II

WHEN, about a week later, Ralph Poinsett, just down from the Adirondack camp, following his graduation, had brought in entirely unheralded for dinner the obnoxious life-guard, declaring him to be his classmate and good friend, and none other than Joe Wetherell, Lucia had scarcely been surprised; the announcement so satisfactorily explained her prejudice against the idol of the beach.

"I knew from the moment my eyes first rested on you," she said to him, "that we had every reason to dislike each other."

They were alone for the moment upon the spacious veranda of the Poinsett house, the young ladies of that house being busy at the instant in explaining to their family Lucia's peculiar relations to their new guest, and in mastering their own surprise at the turn of affairs.

"There isn't a bit of reason," she resumed, Wetherell having received her former remark in silence, "in your masquerading here any longer in this absurd fashion. I am not at home, and *you* should be. It is perfectly safe for you, I assure you."

"Do you think I need that assurance?"

"Haven't your actions for years implied the need of it?" she countered.

His answer, long in coming, had a strange effect upon the girl.

"I knew," he said, and his voice fell into a mellow seriousness that held her breathless in spite of her irritation, "from the moment my eyes first rested on you that there was every reason why I should like you."

Before them, in the wan light of the sickle moon, stretched the spectral beach, at the foot of which, colorless

and dim, the ocean heaved and broke. Far to the right on the purple horizon flashed momentarily the brilliant beacon of the Hook.

Lucia was dressed in the Southern girl's Summer costume of simple white, without an ornament even where the low neck of her gown revealed the delicious lines of her throat. It was something now in the fluttering of her bare throat that told Wetherell he had offended.

"Do you think that generous?" she cried, after a moment. "Surely you do not consider me the kind of girl to be fed on empty compliments?"

"And do you deem me the kind of man to make empty compliments to a woman?"

"There must be something to account for your very great popularity."

Aware of what it was that brought him the popularity of which she spoke, he found it within him just then to abhor his potent young manhood and its goodly semblance. But suddenly the realization that he might ask for no greater boon than to be able to give the girl beside him all that he had and was, made it seem a glorious thing to be the young god he was. He turned his gaze upon her.

Every line of her lovely face had set itself against him in outraged protest. Swept into sincerity of utterance by an impulse he did not seek to fathom, he leaned forward in the low wicker chair he sat in, elbows on his knees, and compelled her eyes by the intensity of his own.

"Can't we let bygones be bygones, Miss Prioleau? For years we have each been fleeing from shadows, knowing nothing of the substance. I confess the idea of a ready-made wife for me was as distasteful as the ready-made husband must have been to you. Indeed, I was never wholly unmindful of the part you were expected to play, against your will. That is one reason, honestly, why I sought to avoid you. But what did either of us know about the other? Now that we have met——"

"We know just as little. Suppose you had found me freckle-faced and

snub-nosed, Mr. Wetherell! Wouldn't the personal equation have solved the problem?"

"It would," he assented vehemently, "but in the light of facts it's preposterous to suggest such a thing."

She quite overlooked the latter words in the sting of his frank admission. He had admitted that he would have scorned her had she not pleased him by her beauty. Lucia placed as little store by her own beauty as she did by his.

"I fear my antipathy to you has become too deep-seated to be easily overcome, Mr. Wetherell," she said coldly. "And, moreover, I have a constitutional aversion to popular heroes. With all the admiration that you have, surely you won't miss the lack of it in me."

Conscious that she was unpardonably rude, Lucia threw her small head back, and watched the moving figures on the Board Walk below them. She started at Wetherell's pleasant laughter, flushing all over even under cover of the twilight.

"I'm the cheapest sort of popular hero," he was declaring. "Small boys and Summer girls, envious of tan and muscle, compose my admirers. Thank the Lord you aren't one of them. As for your antipathy, I accept it as a challenge, Miss Prioleau. I generally get what I want, and I very much want your good-will. And by no means only because you deny it to me," he added.

"Oh!" cried Lucia, "that, of course, you have already. Why not?"

She turned from him to greet with an affected eagerness her cousins, who at that moment came out upon the veranda.

"We are going to walk down to the Park, Lucia," announced one of the girls. "It's horribly vulgar, but barrels of fun, and a good novitiate to Coney Island. Of course, you are going, Mr. Wetherell."

But it was with her cousin Ralph that Lucia found herself presently upon the Board Walk, clinging to his arm as he elbowed a way among the crowded pedestrians in the direction of the lights

of the more popular resort of the beach. Wetherell's erect figure as he guided the two Poinsett girls served also as their own guide.

"And to think," cried the boy to Lucia with characteristic frankness of speech, "that you and old Joe Wetherell have rushed fully engaged into each other's arms unbeknownst! It beats the band! I say, Lucia, you will spoil the romance of a thousand hearts that beat as one in their longing if you let this get out on the beach."

The girl stopped so abruptly that young Poinsett realized the error of his ways even before she burst out indignantly:

"I think you are quite the most odious person I ever met—not even excepting your paragon friend."

"Isn't he a corker?" cried Ralph unabashed.

Lucia crushed him by her glance, drew herself up, and resumed motion. She suddenly felt very lonely and far from home. Kind as her newcousins had been to her, there was something about them foreign to her experience—an aloofness, an independence of sentiment that made it impossible for her to conceive of them being more than superficially touched by the emotions of others. And now Ralph's free handling of what she considered her own peculiar affair had shocked and wounded her. By the time, however, that they reached the dazzlingly illuminated walks of the miniature Coney, Lucia's spirits had revived.

"It's like fairyland," she cried in her naïve pleasure at the sight, unmindful that it was to Wetherell to whom she appealed. "I never saw so many electric lights together before."

They were both unconscious that the Poinsett girls had drawn their brother aside and were purposely leaving Lucia alone with Wetherell. He, thinking it rare good fortune, was feasting his eyes upon the girl's beauty and momentarily becoming humbler in his own sight with the humbleness of the true lover that yet abides with a masterful sense of determination. And Lucia was too engrossed with all she

saw to be aware, flitting childlike from object to object with Wetherell beside her.

"I believe the biter's bitten," observed Ralph to his sisters.

"Have you just caught on to that?" returned Beatrice, sagely superior. "If Lucia wasn't my cousin my heart would be broken."

Feeling himself an instrument in the hand of Destiny, Ralph bought tickets for the scenic railway, summoned Lucia and Wetherell peremptorily from before a ridiculous exhibition of fakirdom, placed one sister on a seat beside a lady of unquestionable avoirdupois and dubious perfume, seated himself beside the other, and motioned Wetherell and Lucia to a vacant seat in front.

"Talk about the unreality in fiction of love at first sight," he muttered, as the car started on its run.

Now that ride with its blood-curdling dips on tracks that ran dizzily over the dark, heaving ocean did two unexpected things. It frightened Lucia, unprepared for the nature of the ride, so that she clung tenaciously to Wetherell, and it opened her eyes as a result of this clinging to the existence of the mild plot against her. Incidentally it might be said to have added fuel to the ready flame of Wetherell's devotion. He wished the ride might never end.

But it did, and Lucia, flushed, her eyes gleaming, sprang unaided from the car. To her surprise her cousins remained seated. Wetherell had risen and stood uncertain before his seat.

"Get in again, Lucia," cried the girls. "You will like it the second time."

Lucia shook her head with grim determination. In the meantime the car had filled. Wetherell stepped out beside her. In another moment the car had once more started on its run.

The girl stared at her companion with no attempt to conceal her vexation. The very fact that she had lost her temper threw its weight into the scales against him. Her eyes flashed. Her lovely lips twitched.

"I could not leave you here alone," he said humbly. "What have I done to annoy you?"

"Everything," she cried, defiance in her eyes and voice. "I did not know you could be so ungentlemanly."

He instinctively drew himself up, but almost as quickly he spoke, very gently.

"Let me see you to a seat until the others return."

She turned her head to hide the tears in her eyes. Angry though she was, she was even more miserably ashamed, but her anger conquered. With her face still averted, she spoke:

"I wish you would understand, Mr. Wetherell, that I have spent my last dollar coming on here to avoid meeting you."

A moment's silence. Then:

"To avoid meeting what you wrongly conceived to be me. Isn't that it?"

She caught her breath, and, turning, let his eyes meet hers.

"What I actually find you exceeds what I fancied you."

And then he smiled, brightly, good-humoredly smiled into her angry eyes.

Lucia was very white. She had a horrible fear that she was going to cry. It seemed to her hours before the others rejoined them, and relieved her from a situation which she found unendurable. She rode home on the trolley-car with Ralph. The others walked.

The next morning on the beach she cut Wetherell dead, standing as he was, surrounded by a group of women, one of whom to Lucia's infinite disgust laid her hand upon his bare arm. His statuesque beauty challenged every fiber of the girl's aversion. With her back full upon him, her face turned seaward, she awaited some steps away the coming of her cousins who had gone up to Wetherell, the group of women who had surrounded him melting away as he advanced to greet their authorized approach.

When they had left him Wetherell, unaccountably shy at the thought of meeting others just then, summoned his assistant in from beyond the breakers, and himself mounted the catamaran. A few strokes, and he rode at ease beyond the immediate surf. His eyes

sought among the figures on the beach for Lucia's form.

He made no attempt to delude himself as to the nature of his feelings for the girl. He never doubted that in some way he could win her. He smiled and took a long pull at the oars as he thought that this was the fate he had sought for years to avoid.

That night he called at the house, asking for the ladies, but Lucia managed to slip away even as, in Southern fashion, he was occupied in shaking hands all around. She went up to her room, sitting by the open window where she could hear the murmur of their voices from the piazza below.

It was a beautiful night, with a brilliant moon lighting the Western sky and the gleaming stretches of the sea. Brilliant stars, too, refused to pale their glory in the zenith. And the Board Walk just before the house swarmed with coolly dressed men and women taking their post-prandial stroll. Lucia alone seemed to herself cut off and deserted.

She hardened her heart anew against Wetherell. She at least would show him that it was not just to come, to see, to conquer with her! She bit her lip hard at the recollection of his assured smile the evening before. Was it possible, she wondered, that he might think she had in some way come to know of his whereabouts, and sought him out up there? But that was too inconceivable!

Undoubtedly it was rather mournful sitting upstairs alone, and after a time, when she heard laughing voices and footsteps going down the front steps to the Board Walk, she drew back behind the curtains, waiting a few minutes to be sure they had gone, and then went down to join her aunt on the veranda. Her aunt was there, and Wetherell sat with her.

"Mr. Wetherell has waited for you to take a walk, Lucia," Mrs. Poinsett explained. "Your cousins have gone for a stroll."

"I shall stay with you, Aunt Julia," replied the girl. She had barely nodded an acknowledgment of Wetherell's

presence and quite ignored his offering of a chair.

"But your uncle and I are going out, my dear," said Mrs. Poinsett. "You must let Mr. Wetherell take you to join the others."

And so it happened that five minutes later Lucia found herself upon the Board Walk alone with Wetherell.

Many times that day Lucia had repented to herself for her treatment of Wetherell the night before, and it is quite probable that had their next meeting been somewhat longer delayed, or compassed somewhat differently, she would have atoned, at least by manner, for the severity of her conduct. But feeling now that he had, in spite of her pronounced discourtesy to him, deliberately sought her out again, determined to be with her, she believed that he deserved no consideration at her hands for this new instance of effrontery. So, hardly had they begun their walk, than she said:

"Just what do you mean by it, Mr. Wetherell? I cannot understand."

"It would sound horribly unconventional if I answered you frankly," he returned. "Yet I am tempted to."

"Do!" she commanded.

"I mean to marry you."

She looked at him, her lips apart. Without a word they slowly closed.

"It sounds abrupt, perhaps," he went on, "but it's true. Perhaps, it is because we have both thought so much for years of marrying the other that now it seems to me the only thing in life worth doing."

She found ready words for that.

"I've never thought of marrying you—not even of *not* marrying you. And really, Mr. Wetherell, the days of the cave men are past. Our conversation is ridiculously absurd."

"I think," he responded gravely, "that the days of sincerity are not past—will never pass as long as men are made like me and women like you."

She pondered this a brief moment's space, then she asked with ominous gentleness:

"Just what is your idea of me?"

"Do you want me to be frank again?"

She nodded, a little hesitantly this time.

"I think you altogether lovely to the eye and contradictory to the mind—something to be desired above great riches."

"You don't know what you are talking about," she returned, but had he been able to see clearly in the light of the now waning moon he would have wondered at the warm color that stained even her neck and ears.

They had now walked beyond the crowd, farther than anyone else, and the wide promenade was to themselves. Wetherell had taken her away from the populous end of the walk. If Lucia was aware of this she ignored it. She had not been unaware of the many glances leveled upon them as they had passed the throng of promenaders. She was glad not to have to face that again just at once, and she suggested that they sit down for a moment on the steps at the end of the walk.

"Why not go down on the sands?" Wetherell asked, trying hard to keep the eagerness out of his voice. "I can make you a comfortable seat there."

It was very still under the stars with the lifeless gray sands about them, and, beyond, the void of the sea breaking nearer at hand incessantly into wraith-like lines of foam. Lucia forgot her grievances.

"Isn't it wonderful?" she whispered. "I can't get used to the might and mystery."

"I love it, too," Wetherell said quietly. "I am glad you do."

She remembered.

"Was it altogether love of the sea that kept you here this Summer?"

"That, and something that can never be again."

"Things seen are frequently not so bad as things imagined," she answered, making no pretext to misunderstand him. "Sometimes they are worse."

"Thank you," he said, and she knew by the tone of his voice that he was smiling with perfect understanding of her meaning.

She let a few minutes go by before she asked:

"Are you always as good-natured as you are trying to make me believe you are now?"

"I am seldom happier, you see; there is no make-believe."

"You are easily made happy," she observed drily.

He did not attempt to break the long silence that ensued. On the contrary, he lay outstretched, his face propped on his hands, elbows in the sand, and watched her with an admiration too candid to be rude. It was the girl who presently grew restless under his gaze.

"May I ask whether, now that I am on here, you intend to carry out this absurd plan of yours throughout the Summer?"

"Your being here answers that question. Apart from that, I've engaged myself for fifteen dollars a week, and room and board."

"Then I shall go South at once," she announced, rising, as though she meant to put her words to instant proof.

"Sit down, Miss Prioleau," Wetherell said calmly. "I doubt if the others have returned to the house yet, and we might as well be here as there. Moreover, I know you object to being seen with me by the curious of this place."

"You are right," she assented, in words and action. "You can hardly blame me for that—you have rendered yourself such a popular source of horrid gossip."

It really seemed so to Lucia. Not only her traditions of exclusiveness were outraged by the semi-public nature of Wetherell's present pursuit, but the circumstances under which he exposed himself, literally and figuratively, to the public eye and tongue gave an extra touch of shockingness. Yet it is difficult for two young and very attractive persons of contrary sex to sit for long beneath the stars, close to the immensity of sea and sky, the world far away, and the night perilously soft, without a subtle influence making itself felt in their blood. And one, at least, of these two needed no incense thrown into the flame of his passion to

make it intoxicatingly sweet to his senses. There was, too, to them the community of interest as Southerners met in stranger parts, and Lucia almost unconsciously found herself comparing notes with him about certain things that had puzzled her since her arrival. Wetherell cunningly led her on to tell him about matters of local interest at home. Not until she had begun to do so had Lucia realized how near homesick she was. And every now and then the insistence of his purpose drew from Wetherell some more intimate sign, to have been discerned in tone of voice or reticence of gesture that yet was eloquent had Lucia been aware. But for the moment she was not. He had gained ground only in the negative way of her forgetfulness of their relations. This fact suddenly came home to the girl. It was feminine perversity only that made her use the realization in a scratching question.

"And if you are so fond of Carolina, why have you never returned there all these years?"

If she had expected to put him to the pains of an embarrassing evasion she was doomed to disappointment. Every moment that his eyes rested on her Wetherell's pulses beat stronger to the fixed purpose of his mind. He nestled his body more comfortably in the sand, his elbows lifting his upturned face closer to hers.

"Because I had heard so much of the perfections of the convent-bred girl who was to come back from France to be my wife that I forgot how truth has a way of being stranger than fiction—and truer."

"And so very different," added Lucia coldly.

They ceased speech, the girl's gaze apparently intent upon the flashings of the Sandy Hook light, the man's unquestionably so upon her profile. In all his wholesome, clean career he had laughed at the idea of love at first sight, deeming it essentially but one of the "properties" of the writers of magazine fiction, and the more devious ways of courtship had lain for him in the *terra incognita* of the future which he

might essay to explore or not as occasion bade. But since he had seen Lucia he had needed no metaphysician to diagnose his case. He did not stop to diagnose it himself beyond the certain knowledge which had leaped full panoplied to the proportions of his being that he wanted entirely and meant to have as completely. Thus his next words came from him as naturally as his breath.

"Lucia, will you marry me?"

For several flashings of the distant beacon the girl sat as though she had not heard him. Then, just as if he might have been another light that instant discovered, her eyes turned upon him.

"Don't you think we had better go back now? Surely my aunt must have returned!"

With surprising grace, considering the nature of the ground she sat on, Lucia got to her feet. They did not speak on the way back, a deserted way now under the starlit sky with the sea beating rhythmically upon the ghostly beach. But at the foot of the steps leading to the house Lucia stopped and faced him.

"Good night," she said, and made no offer of her hand.

III

CURIOUSLY enough, as the days went on, Lucia was not happy. It was in vain that she told herself that Wetherell's conduct had bordered closely on the impertinent, the unpardonable. Her contemptuous slighting of his proposal, she knew, was abominable. For Lucia could not doubt the sincerity of his feeling in the light of something in his manner, in his tone of voice, more than all in the quiet, yet repressed purpose of the dignity with which he had met her scathing rebuff. Had she been aware that not for one moment had Wetherell been genuinely discouraged in his determination to win her she would have been spared certain compunctious visitings of conscience not the less poignant inasmuch as she felt them to be deserved.

It is true that for days thereafter Wetherell did not seek Lucia. When she saw him on the beach, as she did every day and not infrequently all the day, he was always surrounded more or less closely by a bevy of women or young boys. There were times, indeed, when he stood aloof, something in the dignity of his bearing forbidding molestation. Again, for hours, he rode the jade-hued breakers, bronzed and watchful on the graceful catamaran. At these times, secure from his interception of her gaze, Lucia would watch him with a curious species of fascination she would not understand, entirely oblivious of the ceaseless conversation of her cousins and their friends. On one occasion, however, this oblivion had given place to a keen interest merging into a most unaccountable irritation. This was when Wetherell himself had become the subject of their chatter, and the girl with whom her cousins talked had linked his name and that of a blondined woman whose scented boldness always smote Lucia with a mental nausea.

"That Templeton woman will land him yet," laughed the girl. "Men are such simpletons about that kind. It is too bad, too, for since we've found out he is a gentleman I'd let him pack his clothes in my trunk any time."

Beatrice had laughed, but Lucia had lost sight of the glowing sea in the sudden stinging darkness that made her eyes flash. She drew her breath hard. The thing that had left her trembling after the first sensation of her abhorrence had passed was the insistent desire to deny this girl's insinuations against Wetherell. Yet neither then nor later had she given any sign of abating her coldness toward him—except once.

The whole beach knew and acknowledged the distinction it was considered by those who swam beyond the breakers to be allowed to rest a moment by grasping the ends of the guards' catamaran—in a few specially favored instances to clamber upon it, and sit until the guards, mindful of their strict injunctions, abridged the

concession by a hint. Rarely some more venturesome boy, or Ralph Poinsett himself, would seat himself beside Wetherell until told to dive off.

When, therefore, one morning Mrs. Templeton rose laughing from beside her noisy group of associates, smoothed her yellow hair, and adjusted her very scant skirts over her hips, announcing loudly that it was her intention to swim out and have a talk with Wetherell, who rode his catamaran beyond the breakers, the beach sat up and took notice. It did so the more inasmuch as Madge Templeton's attentions to Wetherell had lately become most pronounced and, she being a lady whose flamboyant colors were flown with the frank purpose of emphasizing the fact of her being at home, it was felt that something of a test was being put to the young guard. Lucia, sitting near-by with her cousins, felt her face suddenly crimson and a thrill go through her. Then her small head went up scornfully, and she watched Madge Templeton enter the water, dive skilfully under a great comber, come up shaking her marvelously intact coiffure, and strike out toward Wetherell.

"I say," cried Ralph Poinsett, getting up to his knees, "that's going it some." He rose to his feet, brushing the sand from his flanks, and went over to the guard standing by the lifelines and amusedly awaiting the outcome.

Arrived at the catamaran Madge agilely clambered up, seating herself on the narrow seat beside Wetherell. She waved her hand airily toward the shore.

"I've come to keep you company, Joe," she said. "You looked as lonely out here as I felt with that bunch ashore. Isn't this lovely?"

Wetherell drew away from her rather oppressive proximity.

"But I cannot let you stay, Mrs. Templeton. You know the regulations," he answered.

"Oh, forget them," laughed the lady. "Let us defy regulations—you and I. We can talk out here comfortably."

She was wringing the water from her clinging skirts, and failed to notice the

sternness that turned Wetherell's face to marble. His gaze, bent shoreward, singled out Lucia. Aware of the rumors busy with his name and that of the woman beside him, and aware that she would have them so, he made instant resolve. Drawing in his oars, he bent the handles toward his companion.

"Take them a moment," he ordered, and as she did so, pleased, and smiling up at him for this signal favor, he added: "I shall tell them you kindly came out to relieve me, and will send Walter to take the boat." Before she was aware of his intent, he had risen erect, poised, and dived into the sea.

"By the Lord Harry!" murmured Ralph Poinsett to Walter, the guard, "he has given her the sack publicly."

Then it was that as Wetherell a moment later emerged, gleaming and dripping, from the sea, and made the land near Lucia and her cousins, the girl had smiled at him dazzlingly, holding out her hand in unusual greeting.

It was but the flash of the sun in a clouded sky, for when Wetherell, his eyes yet blinded by that wonderful smile, called at the Poinsett house that evening Lucia again slipped off to her room. And this time she did not come down before he left. Yet, inconstancy of the feminine mind, from her filmy curtained window she watched him as he went, kneeling herself, elbows on the cushioned sill. And long after Wetherell slept healthfully on his cot in the bare little room in the bathing pavilion which he shared with his brother guard, Lucia continued to kneel at her window, her gaze turned to the deserted beach upon which she could dimly discern his catamaran lying upon the white sand, or following the wide spaces of the mystic ocean with a strange, sweet yearning at her heart which filled her with a wordless wonder.

But Wetherell had acted rashly when he had affronted the blondined lady, as he found out the day of his rescue of her friend. The beach was crowded that morning, it being a holiday, and Madge Templeton had made her appearance early, accompanied by a

coterie of friends from the city, "act-orines" and "bounders," Ralph Poinsett had called them, eying them disapprovingly before he left his sisters and Lucia to try his new catboat on the waters of the back bay, and although Lucia had never heard the words before or seen such people, she intuitively felt the niceness of the application. There was a high sea running with dangerous great green combers that towered like walls of jade ere they toppled and broke into seething floods that swept seaward again in vicious undertows. Few bathers dared go beyond their waists that day, and often they were caught by a roller breaking prematurely, and bowled under the mass of foaming waters. Wetherell, even with additional assistance, was busy righting those who could not take care of themselves. The catamaran, useless in such a sea, lay on the beach surrounded by life belts, their lines coiled in readiness for an emergency.

Wetherell, the waters swirling about his calves, stood intent upon the many bathers before him, his lieutenants disposed farther away on either hand. Such a crowd with such a sea demanded, he well knew, his close attention. He had seen too many women coquet with drowning by the mere process of sitting upon the floor of the sea with mouths open in waist-deep water not to realize the potentialities as well as the actual menace of such a surf. He was not unmindful that considerably farther out than the majority of the bathers, Madge Templeton was enjoying herself with certain of her friends, but he knew the woman to be an expert swimmer, and the men with her, he noticed, took the thunderous breakers with skilled immunity. It was not until the woman and one companion, more adventuresome than the others, swam out into the open sea that Wetherell lifted up voice and arm, and ordered them back. It was then that he, for the first time, noticed that the man was a most indifferent swimmer. Wetherell could see the flash of defiance in Madge Templeton's face as she

disobeyed him, and led her companion still further seaward.

For a moment Wetherell hesitated. That the whole thing was in the nature of a challenge to him on Madge Templeton's part he could not doubt. The sense of repulsion and the sense of authority disregarded warred within him, but the struggle was ended sharply by the sight of the evident distress of the man he was watching. Even as Wetherell, turning, tossed his cap well up on the beach, the frightened screams of the woman reached his ears. The next instant he had dashed forward, plunging under an inrolling breaker, climbed with beautiful, cleaving strokes of his unimpeded legs and arms those that followed, and gained the deeper sea beyond where yet the billows lifted into towering hills.

The spurious quality of her courage quite gone, Madge Templeton seized hold of Wetherell as he would have passed by her to reach the man who had already sunk beneath the surface once. Wetherell shook her off with scant regard. Then, as the drowning man appeared, Wetherell reached out for him. Thoroughly beside himself with terror, however, the fellow, aided thereto by the action of the sea which threw Wetherell upon him, grappled frantically, locking his legs about Wetherell's thighs and pinioning his arms in a vise-like grip. The two disappeared together. When they rose to the surface Wetherell exhausted all his ingenuity in endeavoring to free himself of the fatal clutch of the man he would save, but once more he was dragged down beneath the waters. It was when they rose the second time that Wetherell, by a mighty effort freeing his arms, dealt his antagonist a blow upon the head which stretched him out upon the water unconscious.

As Wetherell gripped the senseless man and started toward the shore, ignoring entirely the woman who swam near-by, she turned and followed him, a resentful anger keeping her silent. But as they reached the violence of the breakers, and the rescued man, regaining consciousness, began to

oppose Wetherell with renewed struggles, so that the latter again was forced to deal him a stunning blow, Madge Templeton's eyes narrowed cruelly. Relinquishing his burden at the water's edge, Wetherell resumed his watch of those bathers whose curiosity as to the condition of the rescued had not been so morbid as to cause them to leave the water.

But the excitement on the beach became general, and the indignation no less so, when a little while later the rescued man, dried and fully dressed, reappeared with a police officer in his wake and, surrounded by his friends, endeavored to effect the arrest of Wetherell for malicious assault. Madge Templeton was loudest in asserting that the brutal blows had been viciously bestowed.

There ensued a bad half-hour for the police officer. Bewildered by the perfect storm of indignant protest which the accusation aroused, he stood helpless. Wetherell, who had at first flushed angrily, speedily recovered his good-humor, and stood by, an amused witness of the law's perplexity.

"Don't mind me, Billy," he observed quietly to the officer. "Gratify the lady."

Lucia standing near, her face white and startled, heard Madge sneeringly allude to the insolence of hirelings. The girl turned upon her eyes that blazed. The following second she wheeled and darted across the sand toward the avenue that led to the bay. It was half-way down that avenue that she, perfectly unaware of the curious glances that the incoming throngs from the railway station bent upon the unusual sight of a pretty girl in her bathing suit running as though possessed down the crowded street, brought up suddenly against her cousin Ralph and his friends returning from their sail.

"Oh, Ralph," she cried, seizing him by the arms, "they have arrested Joe Wetherell for saving a man from drowning. Come quick and stop them." And something suspiciously like a sob caught in her fluttering throat.

But they hadn't after all, for Billy,

sure that some mistake had been made, and shrewdly suspecting what it was, refused to do the arresting, although the crowded beach to a unit, except for the shunned minority of Madge Templeton's party, acclaimed its willingness, nay determination, to go along to the station house and testify in Wetherell's behalf. And so, when Lucia rushed breathlessly up, dragging Ralph Poinsett by the hand, it was to find Wetherell surrounded deep by congratulatory admirers. Over their heads it was that he saw Lucia and Ralph, and, by some flash of intuition, understood. And the crowd watching him wondered why it was that his face suddenly shone, and his eyes grew so wonderfully luminous. Lucia, catching their eloquent light, dropped Ralph's hand as though it burned her flesh, and stood abruptly very still.

IV

AGAIN he sought her that night, but again Lucia evaded him. He had known that she would. It was Ralph who told him the next morning that Lucia had gone alone to the end of the point, his sisters having taken the train up to the city. And then it was that Wetherell asked for a few hours off duty.

He did not even stop to divest himself of his bathing suit, and as he swung buoyantly down the beach in the golden splendor of the sunlight those whom he passed turned to look at the gleaming bronze of his body and the supple play of the muscles in his lithe limbs. To him, in the vigor of his superb youth, the sea sang to the surge of love in his veins, and the air, gloriously free, blew clean in his lifted face.

He found her far down the beach beyond the last sign of human habitation, where the ocean, clear as chrysolite after the stress of the day before, swept over a beaten bar into an inland pool, warm and sweet-scented in the sun. Here Lucia stood bending over the translucent water, intent upon the fascinating things she saw darting about

within. When she saw him she stood erect, her face crimsoning.

"Did you follow me?" she asked, and the tone was not very gracious.

"Naturally," he answered, and let it go at that.

She came slowly toward him. Wetherell noted the fact with a thrill of delight. He had not moved since she first saw him.

"How did you know?" she asked, when she had reached him.

He was too wise to tell her, but she guessed.

"Talk about the tongues of women," she said scornfully, seating herself on a little mound of sand. "Ralph knew I wished to be alone. I told him so."

Candid as the words were, there was some indefinable change in her manner. Wetherell could not have said in what it lay, which made him feel that his presence was not wholly unwelcome. The realization a little intoxicated him.

"As a matter of fact, Lucia," he said, and she alone noted the free use of her name, "you should not be so far away by yourself."

"Thank you," she returned, and for a moment there was a silence.

They watched the sea, green-gold in its reaches to a more distant blue against which the white sails of some schooners gleamed brightly. Behind them the wind made a sibilant whisper in the tall sand grasses. Lucia sighed, and then sat suddenly erect. She had not meant to sigh, but a strange joy surged full in her heart.

"I suppose," she said slowly, "I should not come here lest someone join me. I had better go back."

Wetherell laughed.

"There would be nothing to gain by that," he assured her, "for you should not go alone. What's done cannot be undone. Lucia!"

Into the word swept the rush of emotion that his badinage had sought to disguise. The girl trembled, turning her face from him, the small head bent upon the neck whose lovely lines tempted him. The silence lay about them full of the mystery of love and life.

He took her by the hand, raising her to her feet and led her, unresisting, where the white sand lay cool and dry under the shadows of the moving grasses. There he hollowed out a seat for her, and made her sit down, throwing himself full length beside her. And in the silence, broken only by the sea's reverberent roll, and the sweet twitter of a startled peewee, wet by the warm ripples of a spreading wave, their eyes met in the blinding light of the great verity.

But though the universe thus focused to the point of Wetherell's supreme desire he found himself strangely tongue-tied, his impelling determination changed to a quivering intensity of joy that feared to put its faith to the proof of speech. A trembling as of cold ran up and down his strong limbs. It was Lucia who presently showed him how completely the moment had passed.

"I am awfully hungry," she said, with just enough of a little laugh to make it clear that she spoke with a full realization of the values of the statement. "Don't you think we might build a fire and bake some clams? We did the other day."

Wetherell turned over, and sat up. At least she was accepting his companionship in good sort. His heart leaped with the delight of this. She no longer shunned him!

A minute later he was moving about collecting driftwood, while Lucia, without having left her seat, piled it skilfully in readiness for the match. Every now and then she directed him to what she imagined a specially adapted piece of fuel. When he had brought enough wood to roast an ox Wetherell stood over her, brushing the dry sand from his patch of clothing. His eyes sparkled.

"Do you expect me to do the marketing also?" he asked.

Lucia laughed, shyly but deliciously. She rose to her feet.

"I'll help," she replied.

Wetherell bent over, and started the fire. Lucia watching him remarked:

"I'm glad you smoke a pipe; otherwise we should have had no matches."

"You will find me a reliable provider in all things," he said boldly, and raised his eyes in time to catch the mantling color in her lovely face. Then they went toward the sea, and as Wetherell unearthed the clams from their shallow beds, Lucia received them in the folds of her skirt.

It was curious how persistently the silence pursued them! Lucia hoped he would think it an expression of her disapproval of his presence there, but something in the light of his eyes as they continually met hers when he came to her to drop into her skirt the clams he had gathered made her doubtful. So she followed him over the gleaming sand, which now and again the ripples of the spent waves sang over musically, wetting his bare feet with their limpid caresses, but making Lucia step aside to keep her dainty slippers dry. Above them and around them the day, burgeoned into the full glory of its golden noon, pulsed with its warmth of color, the sea lifting green and purple under the sapphire skies.

"Haven't we enough?" Lucia asked, though her heart sang as Wetherell shook his head. She could not keep her eyes from him as he moved about, bending down over the shining beach and deftly flirting from their bubbling beds the hidden clams, the shadow of his body, as it fell close beside him, shattered by the purling waves. And every time he straightened up his eyes sought the girl's. Suddenly he startled her by a question. He was at the instant on his knees, reaching for an unusually deeply embedded mollusk, and Lucia stood unusually near, watching interestedly now the hole his strong hands were digging, now the waving lines of his hair.

"Lucia, why did you run for Ralph yesterday when they arrested me?"

The blood throbbed thickly at her

throat. She straightened up, and stepped back from him. She had not disliked him so much for several weeks.

"I'm sure I don't know," she answered. "I remember feeling it was horrible for a Wetherell of Carolina to be carried off publicly to jail, but probably you did not resent the indignity at all." She did not notice that as she spoke several clams spilled from her skirt. Wetherell, picking them up, rose to his feet.

"I welcomed it as the greatest blessing. Do you know why, Lucia?"

He stood before her now, his arms and hands free. She lifted defiant eyes to his, held them there defiantly by a mighty effort as the light in his own deepened, glowed, beat down at last her brave attempt. He reached out suddenly and drew her to him closely.

A moment later, as they both raised up after reclaiming the clams Lucia had again let fall, their faces flushed with the splendor of their love, the girl gave a horrified little moan, and Wetherell turned just in time to see Madge Templeton and a number of her friends ostentatiously reversing their steps a little distance off.

Wetherell's chest heaved, his eyes burned angrily, his jaw stiffened. At the sound, however, of a dry sob from Lucia his rage fled before the rush of tenderness that made his face glow.

"Why should you mind?" he asked softly. "Are you ashamed of our love? For you do love me, Lucia, do you not?"

A tremulous smile lit the girl's face. Her tear-bright eyes glistened.

"Even if I didn't, I'd marry you now," she murmured. "These ridiculous clams!"

As he replaced them, sure now that there was only the witness of the sea, Lucia turned her lips to his.



IT'S a long lane that has no lovers.

THE GROWERS

By Bliss Carman

WE have had *The Seekers, The Spenders, The Spoilers, The Sowers*, treated of and explained in fiction, but as yet, so far as I know, no one has written of *The Growers*.

The subject is a suggestive one. Even the title gives a fillip to thought. The growers are all those fortunate ones who, whether consciously so or not, have kept themselves truly and persistently in harmony with great nature. They have carefully cherished the mysterious seed of aspiration, which is the secret of growth, neither allowing it to atrophy unsown by hoarding it away in the dark closet of discouragement, nor impoverishing it through spendthrift dissipation. Normal growers are not priggish nor niggardly, neither are they ignobly wasteful of what is more precious than gold. They are endowed with the instinct, the impulse, the curiosity, which only constant development and a measure of lawful freedom can satisfy, and which must die if continually thwarted or repressed. The Growers are all those natural children of the earth, whether simple or complex, who have cultivated the most fundamental principles of responsible living—a capacity for improvement and a hunger for perfection. And it is this trait of rational painstaking that lends the most sterling distinction to personality and differentiates leaders from followers, helpfulness from dependence, and the individual from the mass.

For Growers there can be neither stagnation nor decay. They are like thrifty trees in the forest, deep rooted in the common soil of life from which they spring, deriving nourishment from

the good ground of sympathy, stimulation and refreshment from the free winds of aspiration, and producing perennially the flower and fruitage of gladness and well-being proper to their kind and enriching the earth. They are the normal ones, at once the exemplars of all that is best in their species and the perpetuators of all that is most valuable. Between the growers of the human and the forest worlds, however, there is this distinction: that while the monarchs of the woods grow only to the limit of their prime, the spiritual and mental growth of mortals may be unarrested throughout a lifetime. That is the glory of our human heritage and the encouragement to our faith in our own venturesome essay. The power of growth is our talisman against being baffled and dismayed, so that we can confront old age with interest, circumstance with equanimity, and the unknown without fear. And perhaps it may be impossible to bring to the extreme bound of our lifetime any more warrantable satisfaction than to have been a grower all one's days.

The Growers are like the trees in that they make use of such means as they have to further their life. A tree may sprout in ground far from congenial to it, and among conditions that are often largely disadvantageous. Still it neither sulks nor despairs. It proceeds to grow with as much determination as if it were in the most favorable environment. True, its difficult position or inappropriate soil may hamper and mar its growth, so that it will never reach the fine perfection which belongs to its type, but it will grow nevertheless. It does the

best it can with its life, taking advantage of every possible opportunity, and making the most of whatever air and light and soil it can reach.

Just so with human growers. They use their wits to cultivate their aspirations and powers. They employ to the utmost such powers as they have, and fret themselves not at all over faculties or talents or opportunities that are not theirs. They are too busy benefiting by what is, to speculate idly on what might be, or to repine wastefully for what is not. Aspiration is the seed of growth, but it must be farmed carefully like any other crop. It is not enough to have lofty ambitions and ideals, if we do nothing about them. They must be put in practice, or they will not contribute to our growth. It is in making our ideals actual that we attain success in life, and experience growth of personality. Many a well-endowed mortal has failed for lack of effort, while less fortunate ones have reached splendid heights of achievement and growth by dint of cultivating the modicum of powers that belonged to them. Making use of the advantages at hand, to the very utmost in every moment and place, is the secret of the seemingly magic process of success.

Thus The Growers live in conformity with the universal trend of life, having a working faith that its mighty laws are friendly and benign. They overcome obstacles not by antagonism but by utilization. Having done their utmost to harmonize their living with immutable laws, they feel secure in the beneficence of life, and have no fear of destiny. Here is ground for a contentment quite unlike the dullness of stagnation, a basis of buoyant well-being, and a perennial interest in all that influences development. Growers can never be hesitating, fretful, distracted or unlovely for long since some new truth, some unlooked-for beauty, some fresh spring of emotion, is sure to touch their interest, refresh their sympathy, re-inspire their enthusiasm, and re-quicken their whole being to gladder activity once more. To their ears it

must always sound like sober philosophy to say:

"The world is so full of a number of things,
I am sure we should all be happy as kings,"

since hardly anything can exist or happen that is not capable of being transmuted into food for growth in their wise conduct of life.

There are many different ways of growth, spiritual, mental, material—all beneficent, all leading to ultimate perfection when rightly followed, and all necessary for a symmetrical development. We all admit that it is hardly enough, in the history of any individual, that there should be a progress in material affairs alone. One may steadily improve one's worldly condition through life, and remain but little bettered at the close. The advancement in circumstances must be accompanied, pace for pace, by an advance in intelligence and in feeling. Every day "to earn a little and to spend a little less," as Stevenson says, is good proverbial philosophy, and if it be paralleled in matters of the mind and heart, becomes an invaluable word of wisdom. To grow a little more reasonable and a little more kindly day by day is an essential part of the truest prosperity.

The material value of this salutary thrift goes without saying, and one need only recall the riches of character in one's most stimulating friends to be convinced of its equal desirability in the less tangible realm of personal culture and influence.

To our complex human nature symmetrical growth seems the fittest ideal—a balanced development that prevents the limitations of distortion and the friction of discord, and secures the freedom of poise. The lack of an ideal of symmetrical culture is to blame for such imperfect maturity as we find for example in persons who exhibit an over-insistent instinct for self-preservation, protecting and furthering their own animal indulgence regardless of cost to others; in those who are so greedy of mind that they neglect the care of practical things; and in those

again who are over-developed emotionally through uncontrolled avidity of sentiment and feeling.

The best Growers are those rare and fortunate mortals who have divined the incomparable value of a symmetrical culture, and take constant care to utilize the avenues of growth in each of these three directions with equal solicitude. They know, or at least they instinctively feel, that any stultification in the development of one part of that composite miracle called personality means an inevitable injury to the other two, and that none must be preferred or forced singly at the cost of the others, but that they can only be brought nearer to the measure of perfection by being helped and freed and cultivated harmoniously. This is the law of perfect growth.

Growers are the only people for whom we need feel no anxiety. If they are our friends, no matter for how long they may drop out of sight, it is certain that at our next meeting we shall not find them deteriorated nor worsted by life, whatever adversities or sorrows they may have had to face. For all fortune, both ill and good, is converted into means of growth by some secret chemistry of the soul, known (if not actually understood) by all personalities that are intelligently alive. However often they may change their address or their philosophy they can never be worse off. They move their belongings from place to place, only to better their estate; they transfer their convictions and enthusiasms "from creed to larger

creed," only to widen their outlook and refresh their faith.

Again, Growers are the only people who need never be afraid—neither of misfortune, sorrow, defeat, unkindness, nor the shadow of death; for deterioration is the only veritable evil that can befall a personality. There is neither injury nor fault that cannot be outgrown. But when we cease to grow it is a calamity indeed, and just cause for human dread. Fear and despair and anger and ignorance and worry and meanness are fatal, because they arrest growth, arrest spiritual and mental activity, even arrest digestion, and so are inimical to life and happiness. Any one of them may be truly called a partial death, since it causes a dissolution of some glad and natural emotion, beclouding the mind and involving the vital processes in temporary disaster. When the mind is unhinged by terror, or the heart is frozen by grief, the body can neither eat nor sleep, and our whole being is torn from its proper environment of rational and kindly sensibility, beginning at once to wither and die like a wounded sapling or a broken flower.

And who so well as the Growers can afford to drift? They need have no fear of being carried out of their course, for they are in the main current of life, and not in an eddy or by-water. Whither the mighty river of existence may be carrying them perhaps they never inquire. They only know that they are being borne onward by its titanic sweep, in some glad, free, lawful way that makes for ever-widening horizons of happiness.



THE DETAILS

"THE particulars——?"

"Well, Captain Feebles was shot in the back, originally, and went around with his back bent a good deal like an interrogation mark, until he got a portly slab of back pension. Then he straightened up his back until it was decidedly concave instead of considerably convex, dyed his whiskers a fighting black, and set out in pursuit of a buxom widow, who, being a widow, knew exactly how to be caught while maintaining all the symptoms of eluding capture to the very best of her ability."

AT THE END OF THE FLIGHT

By Aloysius Coll

I SOMETIMES wonder, when my eyes grow wide
At some new marvel, painted on the view
Of this, my long Hegira; when the tide
Half buries with her curling plumes of blue
The granite whims of kings; when cities, dyed
In purple mist and sunlight, rise into
The snowy clouds—I wonder, then, will you
Walk some day in my footprints, and abide
Where I have dreamed, to dream and wonder too?

I wonder, now, when Oudjna's mornings rise
As suddenly as the dreaming thrushes wean
Their eyes of slumber; when the kindling skies
Sprinkle the dawn with sparks, and fire the green
Meadows with poppy flame; when twilight dies
On Timghad, and the ghostly columns lean
Upon their shadows—then, where I have been
A wanderer, I wonder will your eyes
Awake some day to see what I have seen?

I sometimes wonder, when, at close of day,
The yodler and the Alpine horn draw near:
When Naples sings her lyrics on the bay,
And Scotland thrills her bagpipes high and clear:
When Kabyle and dark Arab shout and play
The frantic runes of Allah, love and fear—
I wonder, will you ever turn your ear
To catch the legend, and the swing and sway
Of all the magic music that I hear?

I sometimes wonder, when the petals fall
From canopies of purple rose, that melt
For warmth of color; when winds upon a wall
Their censers swing of jasmine bloom, and pelt
My face with fragrant flowers; when, over all
The magic shrines of Norman, Turk and Celt,
The tapers burn—ah, here where I have knelt,
I wonder, will you ever know the thrall
Of holy ground that I have known and felt?

I wonder, yes, I wonder, day by day,
When rose and poppy fire the magic land;
When gipsies sing, and pipes and viols pay
For dancing stallions of the Berber land—
I wonder will I ever pass this way
Upon a lovelier pilgrimage, and stand
Among the flowers, and cities old and grand,
To see, and hear, and watch and dream and pray—
With you beside me in the fairyland?

THE PINK CARNATION

By Timothy Quarles

THE truth of this story, as the Countess De Vainçon told it—and she neither doubted the part that Baron Arnes Von Asschlar played in it nor the probability of what is to me, a wholly impossible thing—I am not by way of urging anybody to accept. The theory about which the story revolves seems to me, as it may seem to you, too far beyond the utmost limits of the knowable to make it possible to accept it, even in part, as truth.

Yet the story was, I know, believed by both Basil Lorne, author of several novels dealing with the supernatural, and Magdala Carr, one of the most sanely wholesome women I have ever known; two people whose creeds lie as far apart as the poles. It does not, therefore, seem to me an unreasonable assumption that there are others who may find possibilities where I confess I do not.

It is with this assumption, anyhow, that I am writing the story down as I heard it that afternoon. Before me are all the impressions gained then—the faded sunlight gilding the patched carpet and heterogeneous furniture in Magdala's studio; Magdala herself, her red-brown head bent low as she sat on a footstool at the countess's feet; the countess, just in reach of the pointing sunlight in the big chair of dull old-rose velvet; and Lorne, in his attitude of breathless attention, his narrowed, jade eyes fixed in a devouring gaze on the countess's face.

I have never seen the Countess De Vainçon until that afternoon, when she stepped into Magdala's studio. She was as beautiful as Magdala had led me

to expect, and I telegraphed as much to our hostess with my eyes. Later, when Magdala introduced us, I saw that she befriended my determination not to leave until I had an opportunity to talk with the countess.

So when the last of Magdala's other guests had finally taken their leave and the countess rose too, Magdala laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

"I have promised Mr. Barrendorr hundreds of times that you and he should know each other," she said. "You *must* stay now, and make at least one of my promises good. I want you to see how nice a Parisian American *can* be."

Before Magdala had coaxed the squat, ugly little kettle to boiling anew, Paris, that unfailing progenitrix of friendships among those who love and understand her, had made the countess and myself more than acquaintances.

I knew something of her already. Of the death of her only sister, whose child had since been her constant companion, Magdala had told me. I knew, too, that she had recently suffered a terrible illness; and before Lorne interrupted us, coming in unannounced, and, I think, undesired by any of us, I had begun to see what I fancied must be the effect of this illness.

The telling of the events, which were responsible, however, for at least some of the lines about her lovely mouth and eyes, was precipitated by Lorne himself.

After he had greeted the countess with what was for him an unusual effusion—she was an old friend, it appeared, and

he had not seen her since her return from America—Lorne stationed himself on the hearth-rug, where the sunlight might shine full upon his artificially lightened hair.

I have often been in the room with Lorne, and I have never failed to see him place himself with an eye to the light. As Magdala brought him a cup of tea, he plunged at once into the world which I have often thought must nurture his soul as well as his body. Lorne's existence is passed close to a door which, opened, he believes would mean for us a whole book of revelation, cases of dual personalities, the optional inhabiting of two bodies by one soul and so on *ad infinitum*. What it would mean, I think, if it ever happened to Lorne, is insanity.

"I've just heard something which will work itself admirably into my new book, Magdala; something which, I am certain, you, at least, will be sure to like." He spoke with that characteristic disregard of the fact that his entrance might have interrupted some more absorbing topic of conversation.

"A fellow at the club just told us a remarkable bit about the dual personality of an East Indian nabob, which forced him to lead two such diametrically opposed lives that——"

"That fat globe-trotter from Constantinople?" I interrupted ruthlessly. "He told the same story last night in the billiard-room. Unspeakable ass, I thought him."

I felt an intense desire to asphyxiate the conversation before it went any farther.

"Ass! He's one of the most understanding men I ever saw; simply a live interpretation of the East," Lorne answered decisively. "He has the whole field filled by dual personalities at the tips of his fingers."

"Did his fingers have tips?" I murmured inconsequently. "They seem to me so pudgy; so—so quite without tips, you know!"

Lorne flashed a not particularly pleasant look at me, and went on to the two ladies:

"And do you know, really quite a

wonderful thing occurred. I happened to have read once a tale—a legend about a murdered man whose soul was supposed to go into the body of his dog for the purpose of tormenting his murderers. And this fellow, who lived in India at one time, was really *almost* able to authenticate it. He himself knows the man who——"

"Oh, Basil," Magdala interposed, "how perfectly absurd!"

Lorne raised his hand.

"Listen, Magdala," he said. And straightway he launched upon a claim that there were proved cases where a spirit inhabited at will the body of a man or animal.

If there ever was a time to waste on such gruesome topics, it seemed to me that this was an hour surely designed for pleasanter things. It appeared deadly stupid to hark back to the diseased past of a dirty country, when outside flaunting Spring sights and green blowing things were ours to chat of.

It was then, I think, that, happening to glance at the Countess De Vainçon, I realized that the things Lorne was saying were, without doubt, interesting her profoundly.

"There is another version of the same idea. This, at least, Mr. Barrendorr, will be altogether new to you. I got it from a source which—well, which you wouldn't be apt to know about." Lorne seemed to recognize the interest that was being accorded him, too. He turned directly to the countess as he went on with his remarkable story.

"There was a girl in India who, her birth being mysteriously enshrouded in darkness, was supposed to be a half-girl, half-tigress. She loved a man who didn't believe the things told about her; chief among them being that there was a beautiful yellow tigress in the woods whose life was bound up in her life."

"Showing himself to be an unexpectedly sensible fellow!" I interjected drily.

I felt maturing in my mind the half-formed determination to go. I would if Lorne didn't stop "gassing" very soon.

"One night he was coming home with some other hunters through the woods," he continued, "and he became separated from the others. After wandering aimlessly about, uncertain which way to go, he fell asleep under a tree. He awoke suddenly, to find, lying so near that he might without moving have put his arms about her neck, a very large, beautiful yellow tigress. He felt perfectly certain, of course, that his last hour had come. The animal, however, made no attempt to harm him. He was allowed, unmolested, to move away.

"He was overpowered by weariness; and an hour or so later, believing himself to be quite safe, went to sleep again under another tree. He awoke the second time to find the tigress lying again near him. With fear, not unmixed with wonder in his heart, he arose. This time, however, the tigress got up and followed him. Mysteriously frightened, he raised his gun and struck at her. The tigress whirled, after a second's pause, and trotted away, disappearing into the woods."

"Without attacking him?" Magdala asked incredulously.

"Without attacking him. At dawn he discovered his path. Later, he went to tell Nahala, the loved one, of his hunting expedition. But she refused to see him. In one night, though it sounds incredible, a curious, unexplainable aversion had succeeded her former passionate love for him. After that night she never let him see her face again."

"And you think it was because she and the tigress were akin; because he had struck at the tigress?" Magdala asked, interested in spite of the incredulity in her voice.

"I have not the smallest doubt of it!"

"Do you think, m'sieur"—Countess De Vainçon's words came a little breathlessly, her eyes glowing full upon Lorne's face—"that if he had fired—to kill, that Nahala would have died, too?"

"My friend, I am as certain of it." Lorne answered deliberately. "as that you and I are sitting here, ignorant

of the miraculous things happening about our ears, our eyes, just beyond our touch."

"Oh, he wouldn't have shot," Magdala cried, "because, down in his heart, since he was of the visionary East, there must have been some shadow of belief in the legend about the girl, which would have kept him from killing any yellow tigress."

"I think you are right, Magdala," Lorne said sententiously. "I don't think he would have shot. Of course, if he'd been a man with any scientific knowledge, his opportunity would have been his responsibility; he *couldn't* let such a chance go."

"You think, m'sieur, if he had been a scientist, it would have been his duty to shoot?" The countess asked the question with a little gasp.

Lorne spoke authoritatively.

"If man might become as a god, dear lady, knowing good from evil, should he not?" he asked impressively. "If he might find out that man and animal and plant all draw their sustenance from the same source—should he not?"

"No—no," the countess said. "Oh, never, m'sieur, if the knowledge has to be gained in such a way!"

I think we were all surprised at the agitated feeling in her voice.

"You would find yourself in a minority, countess, if you expressed such views as that," Lorne said. "I hear, by the way, that a little book on this subject is about to appear from one of the greatest living authorities on these matters—Baron Arnes Von Asschlar, of Vienna——"

"Baron Arnes Von Asschlar!" the shrill note of the countess's voice struck sharply across Lorne's smooth tones.

I had met Von Asschlar several times in Vienna, and I knew him for a brilliant diplomatist, a student of wide repute in certain science dealing with the supernatural, and most of all a man of phenomenal success with women. None of these things explained the look, for which I find no adjective, transforming the Countess De Vainçon's face.

It was then that—I don't know how

or why—from some mysterious source came the knowledge to me that we three in Magdala's faded little studio were going to hear something; something strange and weird; the something which was responsible for Countess De Vainçon's sudden and astonishing emotion.

"Certainly! Baron Von Asschlar!" Lorne repeated. "A man who is quite wonderful in his comprehension, his rare gift of divination——"

"He may be all that, m'sieur," the countess interrupted. "In addition, Baron Arnes Von Asschlar is a murderer."

"A murderer! Jeannie!" Magdala's voice was crystallized horror.

Lorne turned upon her with amazement and unbelief stamped all over his face.

"Oh, a very wise and occult and— and scientific murderer! I give you that, m'sieur." The countess met his look squarely, with scorn trembling in her voice.

Looking back I can see that it wasn't really odd that Von Asschlar's name was brought up in Magdala's studio on this particular afternoon.

"You—good heavens! I know that you knew Von Asschlar, at one time, better than I ever have! But—do you realize what you are saying, my good countess?" Basil Lorne, author, tired hedonist, spoke in a voice which was almost shorn of the graces of conversation.

"Much better," replied the countess quickly, "than you realize what you say when you declare that science can murder, rob people of those they love—and not be guilty like the individual who does these things!"

"You will have to be in possession of some very—very astonishing facts to authorize you in saying so," Lorne insisted.

Quite suddenly the countess sprang up and began to pace back and forth in the little room; as suddenly she came to a standstill before Lorne.

"I am able, m'sieur," she said. "I will tell you . . . how I know what I say is true! Magdala, you have

wondered why my niece did not marry Baron Von Asschlar; why the friendship was broken off so suddenly. I will tell you . . . And you, m'sieur, shall hear that liberty itself has no greater crimes committed in its name than science; when science is in the hands of a man like Baron Von Asschlar . . ." She sank down again in the chair she had left a moment before. Magdala crossed the room and pulled up a low footstool at her feet.

"There are no laws for a crime such as he committed," went on the countess, "yet he is quite, quite as guilty as the man who strangles his friend, or the woman who poisons her undesired husband. I am telling it that you, m'sieur, and all scientists, shall know what terrible things you may do, thinking you have the right; if it were possible, I should like you all to profit by this—thing which I saw done."

I have repeated the story in the countess's own words. To me, as I have said before, it is fantastic, unreal.

It is, of course, more than likely that it is merely the product of the diseased imagination of a solitary man, almost in his dotage, and that of an erratic scientist, one who acknowledges himself to be a believer in the supernatural helped out in the end by a—well, a most wonderful coincidence, to say the least!

The countess did not shift her position as she told her story. Her voice, rich and deep as one would expect to find it, reached us all with singular distinctness, low and rapid as it was.

Since my niece's début, three years ago, she has received much attention, both in Europe and in America, her father's native country, but I do not think her name has ever been coupled with that of a man more widely known, more courted, more prominent in a dozen different fields, than Baron Von Asschlar.

We met him last Winter, in Washington, where Eugenia spends part of each year with her father; and at once he enrolled himself in the list of her admirers.

Even before the thing which I am about to tell you happened I hoped my niece would not care for him. Brilliant, successful men, as we of the world must know, do not always succeed in making a woman happy.

I was not used to the variable American climate. In January, in the midst of the gay season, I became ill. If I had not! But there is no *if*. And yet if the need for it had not arisen, there would have been no real language; for life, the mother of language, would have remained forever stagnant in the Garden of Eden!

When my convalescence began the doctors urged that I leave the busy life of the capital. I wished to return to my home in the South of France, but, if I did so, I must leave Eugenia behind me. Just when I was undecided what to do, a friend of Mr. Armstead's came forward and offered me a house of his in the mild climate of Virginia, for as long a time as I cared to use it; a big old plantation home, kept up by faithful servants and only visited at long intervals by its busy owner.

I promptly accepted the generous offer, knowing that I could keep Eugenia with me for a little time if I sent her back later to her father.

I found when I was well enough to travel that Mr. Armstead's sister and her daughter had prepared to accompany us, and that Baron Von Asschlar was also to be of the party. I do not know exactly how this last came about, except that the baron is in the habit of getting what he wants. Mrs. Engleside, Mr. Armstead's sister, like the women of other society, as well as Washington society, found him irresistible; I suppose the invitation was not difficult to procure.

In a day, after reaching the soft, mild air of Virginia, I felt better; and in three days I took my first walk in the sunny grounds surrounding Mr. Anden's home.

There were horses and an old-fashioned carriage or two in the stables; and on the third morning of our visit we went for a drive over the gently rolling, purple-hazed country. It was upon

my regretting, as we neared the gates on our return, that the drive had not been longer, that Baron Von Asschlar suggested that I should test my strength by walking a little. Gladly falling in with the suggestion, I alighted with the baron.

In front of Mr. Anden's red-brick house stretched the fields belonging in his ancestral acres; the drive-winding its way through rows of box brushes to his porte-cochère, passed through big stone pillars, and into a small forest of oaks guarding the entrance to the yard. We turned into the path leading through the oaks.

We seemed completely monarchs of all we surveyed—the only human beings within miles. We walked a hundred yards or so straight through the miniature forest, and took a path-way which left Mr. Anden's house to one side of us. Then, as we emerged from the last of the grove of trees, to my surprise the path curved and showed us suddenly a small, gray, green-roofed cottage, tucked away behind overhanging apple-trees. Almost at once my surprise doubled.

Close to the little cottage was a tiny conservatory. Ah, my friends, even now I cannot think of that little conservatory, as we saw it then, without a shudder! Why did not some instinct warn me not to go any farther? If I had known what germ of tragedy it harbored!

It was full of beautiful, bright-colored flowers—hydrangeas, and old-fashioned roses, and sweet lavender and white lilies. Against the somber background of the little gray house their sudden display of color seemed singularly vivid and picturesque.

"What a *pièce de résistance*!" the baron said below his breath.

Then, at the same moment, I think, my companion and I saw what instantly drew our attention from all the other flowers.

We had been moving toward the two houses across the grass; on the side next to the conservatory, and, quite suddenly, we saw—a wonder!

It was a carnation placed on a little

stand in the midst of all the other flowers—of abnormal size and of a color different from any I have seen in other carnations on earth; the color, perhaps—of a cloud one sees very occasionally at sunset, or in the lining of a shell cast up at times by the sea; or, perhaps, most of all, *mes amis*, like the color of the inside of a little child's hand. It had only one bloom, a satiny, perfect, beautiful one—but that seemed to dwarf and pale all the colorful flowers about it.

The amazement of finding such an unmistakably rare and lovely flower seemed to increase the miracle of finding a conservatory in this odd place.

Before either of us had voiced our admiration the door of the cottage by the conservatory opened suddenly, and a man emerged. After a second's hesitation he turned and moved toward us.

He was a very old man. He wore a faded coat of Confederate gray, and his grizzled hair drifted above a lined and weather-beaten face to his shoulders.

As he came in our direction I was struck by the contrast between him and the carefully dressed figure beside me. It seemed as if two extremes of life and civilization were meeting.

"We have been admiring your flowers, m'sieur," I said, as the man turned inquiring eyes upon us. "Or, perhaps," I added, "more truly, your flower. Surely, the carnation in the centre is a very rare, unusually beautiful one."

The old man merely nodded. Then he added slowly, as if he did not wish to be too laconic, and might have guessed at our surprise at having his conservatory suddenly revealed to us, "I was Mr. Anden's gardener when he lived here and his wife was alive."

"Will you allow me to go inside? I should like to see that carnation a little more closely," the baron said. I knew that he loved flowers.

The old man perceptibly hesitated; then he advanced and opened the door slowly and the baron and I went

into the small, sweet-smelling sanctuary.

Hydrangeas and oleanders and purple mignonette brushed against us—the conservatory was as complete as one ten times its size might have been.

The carnation at nearer vision was even lovelier than it had appeared through glass. The baron stood facing the sunshine-filled windows next the little cottage, and I turned from the incredulous admiration in his eyes to translate for myself the beauty with which it seemed to fill the little conservatory.

Its beauty grew on one, almost like the beauty of a human being.

"What is your secret, my friend?" asked the baron, and I noticed that the vivacity of his voice was blended with the deference one feels for anyone who has achieved success in his line. "How did you manage to produce such a flower as this?"

Again the old man hesitated.

"My daughter raised it, sir," he answered presently with what sounded like a conscious note of finality in his voice.

Involuntarily I glanced toward the cottage.

"She lies over there, ma'am," he said, understanding. He pointed with a shaking finger to where, almost indecipherably, a far-away church steeple raised its tapering form toward the sky. "My—my only daughter is dead."

"But surely—it is impossible to believe that you yourself don't know how she bred such a flower." The baron spoke with incredulity.

Again, curiously, I was impressed with the fact that the old gardener did not wish to answer.

"The flower was the gift of her husband, sir," he answered, rattling the door-knob upon which he had kept his hand. "If it is beautiful, perhaps it is because love made it so. Love, sir, as perhaps you know, can work miracles."

He opened the door, as he finished speaking, the movement clearly indicating that he was ready for us

to leave. Then, unexpectedly, something happened.

The baron had made a little unconscious gesture of irritation at the lack of candor in the old man's manner. He turned away from the flower and glanced toward the cottage. And I was surprised at a look which flashed into his eyes. It was a look which arrested itself before it had matured. But that there was a new, stimulating thought behind it I could not doubt. And suddenly one emotion which had been merely a shade in the look dominated. The baron's face, to my amazement, became all at once almost inhuman, his expression almost diabolical.

Did he see anything as he looked back toward the cottage?

The old man so evidently wanted us to go that I turned to the door. The baron followed. Then, as if struck by a sudden fancy, he turned back, and when he reached the flower put out his hand and made a motion to pick a leaf from its smooth, green stalk.

Then a remarkable thing occurred. With a sharp exclamation the old man sprang forward and seized the baron's arm. The eyes of the two men met. Then the baron said suavely:

"You must pardon me, my friend. For the moment I had forgotten that your daughter is dead. No strange hand must touch her flower, of course. Forgive me."

"Very well, sir," the old man answered only half-articulately.

He had the door open and when we had passed through fastened it securely behind us. There the baron stopped and spoke a few authoritative words to him on the care of certain flowers.

It was at that moment that I caught my first glimpse of the little child playing about the back door of the cottage.

She was a child of perhaps three years of age, dressed rather oddly for so young a baby, in a coat of some thick, dark green stuff. The color of the garment served an excellent purpose, however, for it brought out the dazzling tints of her skin. Her color

was marvelous; she was perfectly flushed with a rare shade of deep, lovely pink—hands, neck and face. Even her hair, which waved, tendril fashion, about her little face, seemed curiously to have caught in its meshes something of the glow of her skin.

Vaguely, in an elusive fashion, she reminded me of somebody . . . or was it something?

We said our adieux to the old man, and left him standing by the door of his greenhouse. As we walked across the path of withered grass separating the little house from the common road, she ran closer to us, bareheaded and dimpling, her chubby hands outstretched toward us.

It was not, however, until we had regained the winding path, leaving the little cottage and conservatory a fleck of color behind us, that I grasped what was hovering in the background of my mind. At once I stood still in the path.

"Did you notice a very absurd, impossible thing, Baron Von Asschlar?" I asked. "It is startling, mysterious . . . but that child and the carnation are as alike as—two children!"

Afterward, both in the days that followed in Mr. Anden's home and in the days that have come and gone since, I have tried to think when the baron found an opportunity to be alone that afternoon.

My initial walk had tired me, and when the others arranged for another drive, I went to my room to rest.

We dined early. After dinner I withdrew to the library to read my mail, leaving the others in the music-room; Mrs. Engleside at the piano, playing an accompaniment to Eugenia's pretty love-songs, her daughter and the baron listening contentedly. The group seemed very merry—absorbed in themselves. Yet, as I sat by the fire thinking, planning a little, for Eugenia and myself—the baron pushed aside the hanging crimson curtains, and entered the room.

"I have come to disturb your solitude," he said.

He took an Egyptian cigarette from the table and, lighting it, came and stood beside me, resting one bent arm on the mantel. The flames threw a warm light over his graceful pose.

"Give me love, beloved, and I am as a god."

Eugenia's song floated in to us so clearly that we could distinguish the words. The falling of a charred log punctuated them.

The baron repeated them softly. "Our friend, the aged gardener, might have spoken those words himself," he said.

"Our friend, the aged gardener!" I was surprised that he should recall the casual words of one so infinitely beneath him.

"Did you divine this morning, countess," he asked deliberately, "that there was something connected with his flower which the old man did not wish to tell us?"

"We did not find him communicative, certainly," I replied thoughtfully, "but—living much alone, often, I think, makes people reticent."

"Perhaps," admitted the baron, "but in this case there is another reason; a—rather wonderful reason, countess. I am going to tell it to you in, I think . . . in the form of a little story."

"But—you do not know it?" I asked, rather than stated.

He answered indirectly.

His hand dropped, letting his black-sleeved arm lie along the onyx mantel, and he turned, so that in facing me the flames seemed ready to throw all their concentrated light upon his face.

"You worshipers of God must know, sooner or later, how great is the only god—Science," he said in a low voice. "We give our deity not only homage for what she has done, but for what she may do. And we find all things possible to her . . . Countess, I say this to you, because things which you may not even dimly guess at are just beyond the door before which the world now stands, blindly groping!"

"I—to people like me, m'sieur," I answered, surprised beyond measure;

"science, as you know, is only a stumbling-block to God."

"Not always, countess," he answered.

"Listen. It is a story of a gardener's pretty daughter. Gardeners' daughters are always pretty, I fancy, or they would not be perpetuated in song and story as they are. This one had, as beautiful women always have, a lover; and she was married to him on a day of sunshine in the little church of the village. . . . Now, the bride of a year lies under a perennial covering of ferns and flowers, in the graveyard behind the little church."

A recollection of the father's face, as he pointed to his daughter's grave, flashed over me, bringing a mist of tears to my eyes.

"Grief sometimes kills, countess," the baron said, "even in a world which you and I are apt to think of as heartless. The husband of the gardener's daughter was a sailor, and a few months after the marriage he was drowned. Perhaps—such things, we know, are registered in history, he had foreseen his drowning. At any rate, before he left for his long voyage, he brought his wife a little present. Knowing that she loved flowers better than anything else, he brought her the slip of a flower."

"Daily she watched for his coming, but his star was set. He never returned. And before she heard, presently, of his death she found that he had left her something besides the flower, which she cherished tenderly: the hope of the coming of a little child."

"Oh—I am glad," I murmured.

"So was she—glad," said Baron Von Asschlar. "But though she gave that much thought and interest, strangely enough, she gave almost as much love to her flower. Yet, after all, was it strange? The child was to inherit the father's life, but it was the flower he had touched, caressed, brought to her with love in his heart. It seemed to her that in caring for it she could prove something of the depth of her love and grief."

"The little growing plant became her constant companion; she expended

upon it a care perhaps out of proportion to the fact that it was only a flower. She kept it on a stand in her room, where she might see it last at night and first in the morning. And often, when the light in the little chamber made it only just visible, she would awaken to touch it, caress it, as he had touched it, caressed it.

"They love well, countess, these women of the soil! This woman did not seem really content unless the flower her husband had given her was close beside her, where at any moment she might rest her hand upon it.

"More than once her father, when all the world was sleeping, would go upstairs to find his bereaved daughter crouched on her knees beside the green, growing plant, her arms about it, her cheek against it, her sobbing breast upon its expanding leaves. It bloomed, countess—the carnation—after so long a time!"

Something in the peculiar quality of his voice made me think that he meant to convey some particular meaning. And when he spoke again I was certain of it.

"It bloomed on the very morning that the child was born! The mother died, countess," Baron Von Asschlar spoke each word distinctly; "but, but—both of the others lived."

"Both of the others?" I repeated, mystified.

The cigarette, dead in the baron's fingers, dropped upon the hearth. Excitement shone in his eyes, trembled in his voice.

"Both of the others—to whom she had given her life."

"I—I do not understand—" I began doubtfully.

"You do not understand?" Incredulity was in his voice, his glowing eyes. "How is it possible that you do not understand, countess? The child and the flower are sisters!"

"Sisters?" I said the words after him, not understanding.

"Sisters," he reiterated; "with lives so interwoven that a hurt to the one is a hurt to the other. . . . The mother's life went equally to each of

the growing forms of life. The child and the flower are twin sisters!"

I stared at him, bewildered, breathless.

"Listen, countess," he went on, "the days and the incidents of the life of the one could be marked—calendared, by the days and the incidents of the life of the other. That which happens to one leaves always a mark upon the other. . . . Is it not wonderful, incredible?"

"Naturally, the gardener gave the carnation the attention that his daughter had given it; it was from the first a flower unlike any other ever raised before. . . . One day, however, it fell from the stand, breaking two leaves and bruising the bloom. The baby was lying asleep in the high-railed white bed, out of harm's way. But when, presently, he went in the little house to it——"

"What did he find?" I demanded when my companion paused.

"He found," said the baron slowly, "upon her smooth baby cheek an unaccountable, uncaused, purplish mark. And on each little hand, as it lay outside the white coverlid of her little bed, was a deep, zigzag scratch. These blemishes, countess, had not been there a half-hour before.

"Naturally . . . the old man wondered. . . ."

"On another day, in a violent storm, the little cottage was struck by lightning. The fire scorched the doorstep and stunned the child, who was playing just within. The conservatory was not struck. The lesser flowers within hung freshly upon their stalks. But the pink petals of the bud dangling upon the carnation were found crisped and blackened. Then the gardener, who has the mind of a little child, divined something of the truth. . . ."

You can understand, my friends, that I had no answer to make to this that the baron had told me. There is no answer, you yourselves must know it!

"The idea of a likeness between the child and the flower is fantastic," the baron went on, "but the likeness is so

real that we both recognized it! Carnations are not, generally speaking, long-lived flowers; yet a bloom upon this one never dies until another has budded. . . . Countess, if this is true . . .

"Then what?" I demanded, feeling that I had caught excitement from him.

"The spark of life is something no philosopher has ever grasped, no alchemist has ever wrung from his crucible; which no man of God has ever defined!" he cried in a voice which was vibrant. "If this . . . is true . . . whoever proves the discovery will be among the great ones of the earth!"

I don't know why, but suddenly a vague dread filled my heart. I got up from the crimson velvet chair and, with my hand upon the mantel, stood facing my distinguished guest.

"Why?" I demanded. "I do not see what good such a discovery could ever do the world." Then, dominating the confused whirl of thoughts in my mind, came a remembrance of the aged gardener's unmistakable determination to tell us nothing. The idea that the baron was now in possession of his secret seemed, in a vague way, not altogether unconnected with the feeling, like dread, in my heart.

"I cannot understand how and why the gardener should have told you . . . these things, m'sieur," I began. The words which were forced from me were a question.

The others had left the music-room and were coming across the hall. Baron Von Asschlar put one hand upon the curtain. "You forget that I am a diplomatist, madame," he said, his face flickering for an instant into a smile, a smile which somehow made me shiver. "I saw the gardener this afternoon. My life is spent, you must remember, in finding out from people those things which they do not wish to tell. When you have lived—and learned, it is not difficult."

His eyes met mine, inscrutably, for a second; then he turned to meet Eugenia.

In a second the cold-blooded scientist became the charming, sympathetic

courtier. I marveled at the ease with which he effected the transformation.

Now, even, I can recall how the uncanniness of what he had told me seized me, keeping me in its grip; yet he turned from it so easily that one might almost think he had not been interested.

I stopped him in the big living-hall next morning. He and Eugenia had been for an early gallop, and Eugenia had run upstairs to change her habit.

One of the characteristics of greatness—and never think that I deny Baron Von Asschlar's greatness—is, without doubt, to look whatever part one plays; in his riding-dress the baron looked infinitely wholesome, a man whose delight was in wide spaces, high-treed woods, clean air—Nature, as we understand her, in her simplest mood. . . . For a second, I wavered, until I remembered.

The sight of his face when he came back to pick a petal from the wonderful carnation, and the sound of his voice when he said he who proved a kinship between the child and the flower would be among the great ones of the earth had . . . kept me awake all night!

I had come to the conclusion, after a long night of thought, that the terrible thing he had told me was but the product of the diseased imagination of the old man, the gardener. But, reasoning like a woman, I suppose, I knew I wanted him to leave Mr. Anden's house.

"Baron Von Asschlar," I said, "I lay awake last night thinking of you. . . . Do not think me inhospitable when I ask you to go away. For a man of action Washington is a better place than Virginia. An invalid, baron, must sometimes feel an inability to entertain."

For one who leads a life of diplomacy, there are, I suppose, broadly speaking, no surprises.

There was, I think, no surprise in the baron's eyes; for a second I fancied—with nothing, perhaps, to give birth to the fancy—that he understood why I asked him to leave.

"Then, madame, you must allow me to be very sorry that I must leave a day sooner than I had intended." He spoke in the voice of the gentleman who grants a lady's request. "These three days in Virginia—have—meant much to me," he added slowly, "as you know, I think."

I knew, as I heard Eugenia's step on the stair, that before he left he would have brought to a climax that for which he came to Virginia. I suddenly felt sorry for him; I suppose because the knowledge that he was going away lulled the fear which had haunted me through the night.

It was not until that afternoon that he spoke to me. The others had gone to the library for afternoon tea. The big hall looked warm and cheerful; the lamps had been lighted; the curtains drawn on a world in which it had begun to rain.

"Have you, by chance, decided that I may stay a little longer, countess?" Baron Von Asschlar advanced to meet me from the big fireplace as I descended the stairs.

I crossed the hall and sat down on the wide, cushioned seat beside the hearth. There was no use, I knew, to postpone the interview.

"No, baron," I said simply.

He came a step nearer, standing as he had stood the night before.

"Then, before I go, madame," he said steadily, "I want to tell you—what I dare say you know already. I love your niece. I ask your permission to tell her so."

"I am grateful for the tribute you pay my niece, baron," I answered, "but Eugenia cannot marry you!"

"You have a reason, madame? I hope that you will be so good as to give it to me."

"Because neither of you would be happy, baron," I answered. "Because you are so different—with the difference which makes the greatest tragedies in married life! You are a man of the world, conscious of the world's depravity. Eugenia is full of faith—in many things. Where ignorance and knowledge go hand in hand

one must learn from the other; and—and I do not want Eugenia to learn!"

"Having learned, as we all must, that the world is not pure or lovely or of good repute, it is something, is it not, still to keep a knowledge of how to be happy?" he replied. "It is the certainty that I can make Eugenia happy which causes me to urge you to think twice, countess."

"You could not make her happy," I repeated.

"I have much to offer her," he said; "position, power—much wealth."

"M'sieur," I answered, "I married a man who had position, power—much wealth; and my life was—it was hell, m'sieur! The disillusionizing, the coming gradually to see all things—through my husband's eyes—took something from me which I can never have again. . . . When Eugenia marries," I added, "it must be to a man who has high hopes, a clean life, exalted ideals rather than position, power, wealth."

"High hopes, a clean life, exalted ideals!" The baron smiled. "Will you find him in the world in which you take Eugenia?" he asked. Then, suddenly, passion leaped into his voice. "I have loved more than once, countess," he said. "I have never before wished to marry! That must tell you how I love Eugenia. I can make her happier than ideals could ever make her! If you do not give her to me there might be only unimpassioned existence for us both, and instead, if you will give her to me there will be for us both life—life!"

I got up, feeling that I must end the scene at once or run the risk of being swayed by his hypnotic voice, moved by his will, as others had been before.

"Baron," I said, "I can give you no other answer. Believe that the intuition of a mother has given me wisdom."

He met my glance, his hands dropped at his side and his face showed all the agony of disappointed love, the humiliation of defeat that he felt. Quite suddenly the successful man before me understood that, in what he had

most set his heart upon, he was not to succeed.

It was only for a second that he showed what he felt. Then he stepped back a little, indicating that he realized the conversation was at an end.

"There is nothing, madame, for me but to accept your decision," he said deferentially.

Before I reached the door, however, he spoke again.

"Countess, one moment! Our conversation has enabled me to discover something of which, before, I was ignorant," he said, as I turned and faced him. "It seems that we are both seekers after truth. You seek for it in the person of a man of high hopes, a clean life, exalted ideals—in a world which is not clean, or exalted, or idealistic; if you find him, he will, I think, prove unique. I look for unique truth, too—the truth that shall one day triumph over everything else! Shall we not, after the manner of rival pioneers, wish each other the best of luck?"

Without realizing what I said, I answered sincerely, "With all my heart, baron." Then he bowed low and I left him.

I think a little conversation I had with Eugenia, in which I found out that she did not care for the baron, put a seal upon the content I felt; a content which sprang principally, I imagine, from the fact that Baron Von Asschlar was going on the morrow. The fears which I felt the night before were dissipated and I slept soundly, lulled by the steady fall of the rain outside.

We awoke next morning to a bleak, chilly day. It seemed as if Virginia had slipped off her Southern garments in a trice, and evinced suddenly a bleak and unmistakable kinship to her Northern sisters. The storm in the night had torn off limbs from the great oaks and strewn the lawn with them. The scarlet sage and geraniums about the front door were beaten down, and the wind had blown a great quantity of dead leaves over everything.

From the big bay-window in the

dining-room, whither I was the first to descend, I looked out at these things with real distress.

Just as I was turning away, a man appeared in the drive beyond the gate. As he crossed the road, disappearing into the oak grove, I was conscious that his face and figure were vaguely familiar. . . . It was not, however, until Eugenia had come in and we had sat down to breakfast that I placed him.

Mr. Anden's old coachman had pointed him out to us, as we drove through the village the day before. He had buried Mr. Anden's wife in the old, overgrown family cemetery, as his father before him had buried her mother and grandmother. The man was the village undertaker. . . .

Our other guests were not in the habit of appearing until later in the day. Eugenia and I finished our breakfast alone.

Just as I was leaving the room, upon a table behind me I caught sight of a note addressed to me, to my surprise, directed in Baron Von Asschlar's small, scholarly handwriting. While Eugenia, who believed as I did that the baron was upstairs at the moment, waited for me to explain, I opened it and read:

To find *truth* in any form, in any shape whatever, my dear countess, is to succeed in what is best in life. Such an end, I am quite certain, justifies any means. Last night I was not philosophical. Now I am able to realize that I, like other victims who are dragged at the chariot-wheels of truth, have no cause for complaint. For myself I even find a little distinction in being chosen for the part.

Since I must leave, I have chosen to go early. Will you be so good as to convey good-bye messages to Miss Armstead and your guests?

Very faithfully yours,

ARNES VON ASSCHLAR.

"It is from the baron," I said with unexplainable emotion. "He has left us."

"Without saying good-bye!" Eugenia exclaimed. "Really, these brilliant people have very eccentric manners." There were pique and resentment in her voice, nothing more. When she went out I read the baron's note again.

I do not know how long I stood there, afterward . . . or how soon my thoughts crystallized into something definite—into a terrible fear!

When I had finished the note the second time the face of the old undertaker rose, without warning, without reason, before me! And it seemed suddenly as if I were caught in the clutch of some dreadful, all-powerful machinery . . . as if . . . could it be possible?

I got my hat and raincoat. No one was in sight when I shut the door behind me and went out into the sleet and rain. I took the road to the little cottage. I must find out! If I were being uselessly, terribly frightened, I must know it.

It was quite possible, I knew, that the undertaker was not going to the little green-roofed cottage . . . for undertakers, of course, went on errands unconnected with their business.

I told myself these things as I turned into the little path skirting the trees. Then I saw large footprints in the mud of the path; that, too, of course, might mean nothing.

Presently, in the path just where it curved to show the cottage, I came upon something else. It was a man's glove, washed by the rain, almost embedded in the mud. I picked it up. It was slim and fur-lined and exhaled still a faint scent. It was a glove that I had seen Baron Von Asschlar wear. Aye, my friends, as you may already have guessed, all my worst suspicions seemed suddenly confirmed, strengthened. Then I came within sight of the little conservatory. Its door stood open. Some hand had wrenched off the lock, and left the door wide, for within, all the flowers, stung by the icy rain and whipped by the wind, were quite dead. None of the blooms upon their broken stalks showed trace of ever having been lovely or alive.

To me death in any form is always terrible. It matters not what dies. It is never to me the passing of something ephemeral. It is death! And

the dreadful part of this death about me was that it was deliberate. Some wicked hand had caused it!

In the midst, hanging limply upon its glazed green stalk, hung the carnation. Once it had seemed to embody splendid vitality—the very essence of life. Now its frozen flower was as completely dead as if a soul once animating it were gone. The carnation, which the gardener's daughter had raised with such passionate care, was dead, quite dead.

Presently, after I do not know how long, I found myself before the door of the little cottage. No one answered my knock, so I pushed open the door and went in. To the right of the hall was a little square room. In it, beside the bed, sitting humped over in an indescribable attitude, sat the old man. His white locks, drifting over the face crushed between his hands, touched his bent shoulders and the snowy covering of the bed on which lay the little child.

Moving very softly, I went in.

She lay with her tiny white hands palms up. And in the palm of each, as in her face, pale as it was, there was an underlying tint of color of which even death had been unable to rob her. Her curly, tangled hair on the pillow still possessed its curious glow of color.

She lay quite still, her little white lids closed forever on a world no one else had ever walked in. Dead, she was no more like other little children than living. If the dead flower, looking as if it had once possessed a soul, seemed almost like a little child, how can I find words to tell you how, mysteriously, the little child was like a dead flower?

The baron had proved his theory; and it had not mattered to him that it had cost an innocent life to do it.

On my knees beside the bed, her little dead hand against my face, and in my heart the remembrance of the little children whom Herod had murdered, there came to me a terrible revelation of what a *murderer*, this thing you call science—you, m'sieur—may be!

A CALL FOR THE AUTHOR

By L. H. Bickford

SO often had Warwick pictured the first night of his first play in New York that the occurrences attendant upon it seemed, at times, really to have happened. Even at that stage when the drama was merely initial, before it had become a matter of actual mental and physical toil, he dreamed over his triumph and enjoyed, in the full of his imagination, the fruits of the victory of "The Heart's Highway"—rather a good title, he fancied. And, as Sylvia Westburn, Mrs. Comyns should repeat, only more substantially, her long list of successes. For Sylvia had been identified from the first, in such fragmentary scenes and incidents as he had sketched, with Mrs. Comyns, with those gestures and tricks of voice and manner that had endeared the foremost American actress to the multitude. There was a third act climax that would call for all her deftness, sympathy and intelligence. And it was the startling nature of this climax—startling, but thoroughly within logic—that impelled forward the imagination of the to-be playwright until it arrived at a situation of seeming accomplishment.

The curtain had fallen with the audience struck to silence by the strength of the scene it had just witnessed and by the incomparable acting. Hundreds of men and women, the intellectual cult of a great metropolis, brought together by this night of nights, sat there in a great hush facing the velvet curtain as it swung abruptly together and cut off the figures on the other side of the footlights. Then the subtle significance of the achievement seemed to stir them to activity. There was a

gentle rustle—then a full breaking of the stillness as when a storm crashes, in sudden Midsummer violence, over a valley that had but an instant before known the peace of an afternoon. And as a storm, this sound seemed to feed upon itself and to grow greater. The curtains parted to disclose the same tableau on which they had fallen. The storm did not stop. It raged from wall to wall as if it would burst steel and brick and mortar. The curtains fell together—was ever such sound?—only to part again and present the pale Mrs. Comyns, her dark hair in disorder, bowing to the tempest as if she were a frail tree—Mrs. Comyns, with breast heaving from the emotion of that last great scene and with tears hanging on her lashes. Nor did the fifteen thousand pairs of hands—from those of the keen young student in the upper gallery to those white-gloved in the proscenium boxes—cease at this. Again and again the parting and the closing curtains, again and again the distraught Mrs. Comyns, and finally—for a name was being cried even above the crash of palm on palm—a tall, dark, athletic young man appeared hand in hand with the triumphant player. And yet again the tumult, and now the author, alone.

As to his speech, Warwick had always confessed some perplexity. So spontaneous an outburst, and so long-continued, would necessarily move him out of his wonted calm. It would be something to face such an audience—and an audience, at that, unaccustomed to great exuberation over the serious drama considering the paucity of that article. He realized that this

was a test of self-control to which he felt pitiably unequal—and yet he saw himself bowing Mrs. Comyns off and raising a hand toward the excited faces while he started slowly but distinctly to express his sentiments concerning this unusual dramatic night. A word of praise for Mrs. Comyns, without whose genius his efforts would seem poor indeed, a modest disclaimer of his own abilities and something about his faith in the future of the American drama—these, sketchily, were the points on which the audience hung with almost breathless interest. Even then he found it difficult to retire—and, indeed, was not permitted to until he had brought Mrs. Comyns protestingly forward again while she, now thoroughly controlled, stood aside and, joining the others, applauded him with that beautiful effacement of self that stamped her the great artist she was. It was a beautiful compliment. . . .

Warwick did not at once arrive on Broadway as a dramatist. The distance from Sayville, Iowa, to that thoroughfare is long, the way perilous and lack of influence disheartening. Such strollers as came to Sayville and whom he met in Lausig's café after he had written his criticism for the *Review* listened with attention as he unmasked his plots or read the scenario of some particularly dramatic project. They were enthusiastic—and who shall say the enthusiasm was politic, merely because they might happen to play Sayville another season? Managers of traveling companies, who were always pleased to meet Warwick, and who gave him their right hand and a two-column cut of their star at the same time, frankly told him he was burying his light under the Sayville bushel. As for his plays—they would take the matter up with the New York office as soon as they got back. They could name three successes then on Broadway that didn't compare with that piece he had just outlined—and could they tell him who had charge of the dramatic department in Booneville, the next stop?

It was the least promising of these one-night managers who really kept

his word, who not only took a copy of one of Warwick's plays with him and who actually read it. Dalton had sent the script to Mrs. Comyns, whose agent he had been once on a time. Probably Dalton was as much surprised as Warwick at the result, for, "with some necessary changes here and there," Mrs. Comyns communicated that there were possibilities in "The Heart's Highway." In the letter that came to Sayville Warwick had his first glimpse of theatrical finance in its relation to art. For it was natural to conclude, Dalton wrote, that his interest in the author and in the play would not go unrewarded. He supposed Warwick appreciated his efforts—a part of the note the playwright merely skimmed over joyously. Dear old Dalton! Of course he was entitled to a share in the prosperity. An equal share? Why not? Dalton, by Jove, should hereafter be his manager and do those go-between things that are a little distasteful to the creator of dramatic ideas. It was a rôle, as matters turned out, that quite suited Dalton. Flanders, Mrs. Comyns's manager, made certain preliminary financial arrangements, with the result that Warwick went to New York for the rehearsals, leaving Sayville in an uproar over its "rising young dramatist" and shaking the Ibsen class and the Saturday Literary Club to their centres.

Warwick found work before him and disillusion. For one thing, Mrs. Comyns differed from the picture he had made. She was not so whole-hearted, perhaps, as he had fancied she would be. She did not congratulate him, on their first interview, on the structural skill he had shown in "The Heart's Highway." She seemed very businesslike and had a number of criticisms. She might instance the climax in the third act—surely Mr. Warwick must realize that here the interest centred in Sylvia to the exclusion of Bywaters, the opposite male character. Bywaters's speech, too, defending the morals of the average man—would it not be far better to let the woman defend the average man? Frankly, would not

that be something novel and out of the beaten way? Warwick, in some confusion, agreed on these points. It was true that they hurt the logic of his play and made Bywaters weak, but somehow he could not take issue with Mrs. Comyns. And when she reminded him, out of her fund of experience, that the public always expected a "big" scene from her—it was, of course, unnecessary to remind him that, first of all, this public was attracted to the theatre by her name—he made the changes without question.

At the rehearsals she made other suggestions. There was the character of Laura. Did not Mr. Warwick agree that it should be made less conspicuous? Take her ten-minute scene with Bywaters in the conservatory—entirely too long in the circumstances. "For we must remember, Mr. Warwick," she explained with a profound patience for so great an artist, "that it is not what Bywaters does, or what Laura does, or what Jean does, that the public cares about. The pivot is Sylvia, and upon this pivot the play must revolve." In the end Warwick caused Laura to flee from the conservatory with scarcely an explanatory line. He also eliminated Jean. Bywaters's longest "speech" was condensed to six lines. And so, from day to day, while his play lost consistency here and sentiment there, Warwick pruned and Mrs. Comyns "built up," and the rehearsals droned on with incessant interruptions for corrections and long controversies between the star and the stage-manager over entrances, exits, full-pauses, and those important incidentals known as "pictures" and "business."

Warwick was not himself aware of the sweeping nature of the changes made until he contemplated the final full rehearsal. Then they came to notice in a series of shocks. That Sylvia dominated there could be no doubt. But it was not a domination that followed a natural order of events as had been the idea in the original story. Here she did things without purpose, theatrically. She overwhelmed the other characters, who moved about as

if in apology for their presence. The third act climax was distorted and the careful chain of Reason, which he had so painfully forged, showed broken links.

He was deep in his disappointment as this scene was concluded when he was summoned by Gilbert, the stage-manager. With brain benumbed he walked down the aisle and climbed over the zinc trough with its rows of many-colored electric bulbs. Gilbert assisted him to a safe landing.

"There will be some calls here," said the stage-manager in his sharp voice, "and it will be best that everyone concerned do the thing properly. Now then, Burton——"

He turned toward the dim auditorium. Then Warwick noted that, here and there, men sat in the orchestra seats and in the balcony. They had come in noiselessly and now were scattered over the place like pawns on a great chess-board. Even in that gray twilight they suggested those queer people of the streets he had come to know since his arrival in New York—people who stood about the stage doors of theatres, whom you met suddenly as you came around dark corners; people who were waiting, not for charity, but for the odd, easy occupations of city life and the meager rewards that gave them a supper in a cheap restaurant and a place of lodging for the night. They stirred slightly—and respectfully—as Gilbert addressed them.

"I don't want you to spoil this," he said as if in criticism of some previous incident. "Don't all rush into it at once. Work it up gradually. Is Colonel Magoon out there?"

A figure half rose from a seat in the stalls and sank back with a mumbled assent. It was the figure of an old man whose hair and beard were almost snow-white.

"What seat have you, Magoon?"

"G 10," came the husky answer.

Gilbert consulted a piece of paper.

"Have you your dress-suit this time, Magoon?"

A laugh, quickly hushed, ran over the ghosts in front.

"Yes, I have," was the half-defiant reply.

"Well, remember this—Mr. and Mrs. Stryker are giving a theatre-party in those seats near you. I don't want you to get up and go out between acts and I don't want you to be late. You fellows," addressing the ghosts generally, "watch Magoon. Go at it quietly. Don't jam it down their throats—but don't let the noise die out at any stage. Now——"

He turned toward the wings. "If you please, Mrs. Comyns——"

She left her chair and came forward to face her leading man who, at the same time, crossed to meet her.

"There are but two people on here," explained Gilbert to his audience, "Sylvia and Bywaters—remember those names. Pick them out on your programmes tonight. When Sylvia says—if you please, Mrs. Comyns——"

Mrs. Comyns, with that familiar gesture that was almost a mannerism, pointed toward the man in front of her and took up her lines.

"*You might as well know the truth,*" she said distinctly.

"Bywaters" drew back, "as if struck."

"You mean——?"

"*That I am the woman you have been seeking.*"

Gilbert clapped his hands smartly. The violet curtains swung together.

"Now!" he shouted, coming between them.

The elderly Colonel Magoon began to applaud—discreetly, even judicially. He might have been a well-to-do, excellently-fed, honest banking gentleman who had been stirred, but not profoundly, by the scene just enacted. He was joined by others in various parts of the theatre, while Warwick, who had been caught in front of the curtains, looked on curiously.

"Up!" cried Gilbert.

The curtains parted. Sylvia was sobbing in a chair. Bywaters was leaving the room.

"Down!" And the curtains closed.

"Together now!" encouraged Gilbert. "A little more steam on the

right there—warm up, Magoon. So—that's better—now, up!"

The stage was empty.

"If you please, Mrs. Comyns——"

She came out of the wings, holding Bywaters by one hand, which she pressed slightly, suggesting congratulations. She took no note of the people before her. With Gilbert's next signal, however, she came on alone and faced the chess-board audience.

"Everybody!" almost shouted Gilbert. "In the back there—one of you say 'Good!' Do you hear? 'Good, good!'"

The cry came back from some indefinite place, and Mrs. Comyns listened critically. When the shouts died down Gilbert tried the scene over again. Mrs. Comyns, murmuring, then disappeared.

As this strange rehearsal proceeded Warwick's bewilderment gave way, first, to a hearty feeling of contempt for such a method of prearranged enthusiasm, and this was followed by something like admiration for Gilbert's success in his undertaking. For the stage-manager was obviously in earnest in making this auditory uprising appear to be absolutely spontaneous. He pleaded, threatened, denounced and complimented. His patience was marvelous. It was as if he had Marc Antony's mob before him and was working, by every known theatrical device, to a fitting climax. After Mrs. Comyns's retirement in the physical the curtain was swept back and forth repeatedly to his cries of "Now," "That's better," and "Again." In half an hour his noise machine was in such perfect order that it did his bidding at the rise and fall of his hand. It swelled from polite, perfunctory applause to the full of bursting emotion. And it was a simple matter to calculate what this well-drilled minority would do when it came into play with a majority that would, at the least, be impressionable.

The stage-manager stilled his claque at last to declare that the results seemed satisfactory, although he con-

tinued to impress it with the error of over-enthusiasm.

"Mrs. Comyns," he said, "will take eight calls, alone. On the eighth I want you," pointing to a man remote in the first balcony, "to shout 'Author.' Don't make it loud. And you—and you"—here he indicated others—"are to take it up. When Mrs. Comyns appears with the author you, Colonel Magoon, are to shout 'Speech.' Remember, nobody shouts 'Speech' until Colonel Magoon starts it. Take your cue from him. Mr. Warwick will take two calls, one with Mrs. Comyns and one alone. You are to shout 'Speech' all over the house when he comes on alone. Now then—those speeches——"

Warwick leaned wearily against the proscenium arch. He did not lack a sense of humor, and now he tried to bring it to his rescue, but without success. Out of the dusk rose his Sayville dream of the conquest of "The Heart's Highway"—a dream that was to be realized, but after what manner? Then he was aware that Gilbert was speaking to him.

"You'll have something to say, of course—and they'll want Mrs. Comyns again after your speech. If you'll permit me, I'd suggest that you make it brief—just a few words of thanks. They like that sort of thing. And oh—don't forget to say something about Mrs. Comyns and what she has done for the play—her great talent, and all that, you know. Flanders expects it and"—Gilbert looked around him, shrugged his shoulders, and finished in an undertone—"after all, she's the

star, isn't she? Now, Colonel Magoon—"Speech, speech!"——"

Colonel Magoon voiced this desire with fine modulation, and it was taken up by one of the men in the balcony to be echoed, in turn, from the last row of the parquet. It was heard, presently, from each of the fifty until they united on it and boomed it out in triumph. The word hissed in Warwick's ears—a hideous, meaningless word. And as it rose and fell and Colonel Magoon and his companions warmed the palms of their hands by the accompanying applause, he turned toward the wings and picking his way toward the stage door went out into the early twilight.

Dalton found Warwick at half-past eleven that evening in the little bedroom in his uptown hotel. The author of "The Heart's Highway" was sitting beside a window that overlooked a wilderness of roofs. He had his coat off and was in his stocking-feet, as his manager noticed when he switched on the light.

"Of all places—" began Dalton. "Why, man, they were hunting all over the theatre for you. The third act went great—Mrs. Comyns got eight calls and they were bellowing 'Author!' like mad. Gilbert had to explain that you weren't in the house and then they got Mrs. Comyns out again. Why didn't you show up?"

Dalton paused and looked him over, then smiled wisely.

"Stage fright, eh?"

Warwick caught at the suggestion.

"Yes," he answered, "I suppose it was stage fright."



EXPERIENCE TEACHES

THE successful alumnus of the class of '85 was addressing the class about to graduate.

"Show me a man," he shouted, "who takes abnormal interest in his business, and I will show you a——"

"Pawnbroker," said a voice in the front row.

THE PARABLE OF THE SACK

By John G. Neihardt

“**A** MAN’S chief business in this world,” remarked my friend, who is something of a philosopher in his way, “is to break his heart under some load. Only the worthless ones fail to do it.”

I smiled, for I am rather a cheerful person.

“It’s a fact, and you can’t smile it away,” he continued. “We are all bearers of sacks filled with God knows what; and little does it matter so they be heavy enough for the purpose. But thrice happy is he who does not look into his sack too soon. All of which reminds me of a story.”

Whereat he told his story in substantially the following manner:

One July day during the gold excitement of the ’70s the Deadwood stage thundered down the hill into Placer City, swung round sharp in a cloud of sand from the heels of the reined-in leaders, and drew up in front of the King Nugget saloon. A tenderfoot stepped out. By way of impedimenta he had with him an old-fashioned valise and some preconceived ideas of the West.

His whole story, so far, could have been read merely by opening the valise; for it contained, as I happen to know, many (shall I say it?) unnecessary articles which could have been placed there only by the hands of woman in accordance with feminine notions of masculine comfort.

His mother had packed the valise, you see, and very well was it packed, though her hands had trembled with dreadful misgivings and her tears had dampened some of the unnecessary articles, perhaps.

As to the preconceived ideas, they were plainly evidenced to the loungers about the saloon by the stranger’s general appearance. He wore leather breeches of a very wicked Western cut, slashed into fringe at the bottom; a pair of exaggerated plainsman’s boots and a buckskin coat, though the day was hot. About his middle hung a heavy belt supporting many rounds of cartridges and two very bright and shiny revolvers. No doubt he had his new rôle well thought out, and so he made his entrance in the costume of the part.

But all these trappings were so ostentatiously *new!* You felt that a little careful scrutiny would reward you with a sight of the penciled selling price and the cabalistic cost mark of some Omaha outfitter!

Yes, the stranger was young—a fault which, however, with the aid of good health and fair luck may be corrected.

You could easily find a description of him from his neck down in almost any of those dime novels that deal with the Wild Bill type. But for a description of him from his neck *up*—well, you would have to read pastoral poetry and that sort of thing. The spirit of the country—with all that it means—was in his face.

His eyes were clear and guileless—like a June sky over green wheatfields—and his cheeks made you think of Rambo apples tinting slowly in the sun. At first glance you would have said, “Here is one who has listened much to the tinkle of cow-bells floating up green draws, and dreamed big dreams in the hush of harvest nights.” You

looked twice, and then you saw, in spite of the heroic effort of a swagger, that he had not yet outgrown his mother.

A ridiculous sort of hero, you say? Perhaps. But are not all heroes a bit ridiculous in the last analysis?

Be sure there was a stout, honest heart beating regularly under that buckskin coat; a heart that had not yet learned how to break under the strain of impossible ventures. And behind those clear eyes the rich virgin soil of an unsophisticated brain awaited the seed of big luxuriant beliefs.

Indeed, an ideal hero for the bearing of a sack!

He smiled boyishly as he pushed through the bevy of loungers and entered the bar-room of the King Nugget. One who smiles in his particular way has never known suspicion. Somehow, his smile makes me think of sweet cider and heaped-up apples and simple folk sitting about open fireplaces when the first nip of frost is abroad in the night.

He passed among the gamblers at the tables with a forced nonchalant air, as though he had not looked upon such for the first time in his life. When he ordered whisky at the bar his voice was quite gruff. The horses down on the little Indiana farm would have pricked up curious ears at the sound of it, and the cows would have mistaken it for the voice of a stranger.

A guttural mirth grew up in the bar-room, and the loungers and gamblers crowded about the bar to have a look at this latest type of the greenhorn. But the stranger was too busy getting his first drink of whisky down his throat to notice the nudges and grimaces that went around at his expense. The unaccustomed drink gagged him a bit, and he was thinking, with a little twinge of shame, of a certain promise made to his mother. But mothers can never really understand the ways of men. Still, warm, fresh milk and the water from the spring that bubbled out under the old oak back home were really better drinks.

A rough miner shouldered his way

through the mob, winking sidewise as he went, and resting his elbows on the bar, turned a mock-serious and wolfish face upon the greenhorn.

"How was crops when you left?" he inquired, carefully picking an imaginary hayseed out of the stranger's hair. "Pumpkins big this year?"

This warmed the heart of the greenhorn. Although he could not quite confess it to himself, he felt a strange sense of gnawing in his breast when he thought of home. The world was really so much broader than he had dreamed. Crops? Here was a subject for talk! Oh, he knew all about crops. Corn didn't promise very well this year. He thought, however, that wheat would go twelve bushels. Rye was poor because of dry weather during heading time. That is, he was speaking about the crops around Johnson Corners—Johnson Corners, Indiany, you know.

"Give Mr. Johnson Corners a drink on me!" said the inquiring one to the grinning bartender; "and make it whisky. Mr. Johnson Corners don't drink nothing but whisky! How was all the folks down on the old farm?" he went on for the benefit of the audience that leaned far over the bar, the better to view the greenhorn's beaming face.

Oh, the folks? Why, the folks had moved to town, you know. The folks were his mother and Nellie. Nellie was his sister. The old man (he used the word with an effort at worldliness) had been dead five years come that Fall. You see, the old farm had been sold that Spring. A man couldn't be tied down to a plow all his life. There wasn't money enough in it, you know. A man had to get out into the world and do things!

The liquor and the great good-nature of his audience warmed him up. He became diffusive. He held forth concerning his mother and his sister and his plans for the future. You saw the mother very plainly, for youth is naturally eloquent on some themes. You saw her patient face, becoming a little seamed with worries, yet kind and

wistfully hopeful. You saw Nellie also—a plain but winsome country lass, wearing her first long dresses. And as he warmed up to his theme, it all came out: how he had conceived the idea of selling the old farm and using the remainder of the money—after the mortgage was paid—to go West and get immensely rich, and then go back and do ever so many delightful things for the mother and Nellie.

Nellie was to have music lessons—you just ought to hear her play on the organ! And he would see that his mother had silk dresses like Mrs. Jones, the banker's wife down at the Corners.

To be sure, the neighbors shook their heads dismally at his plans, and the men down at the grocery store—Deacon Brown in particular—said home was a pretty good place and farming not such a bad business. But what was a man to do? Hang onto a plow all his life when there was gold to be picked up? Not he! By jing, he knew a thing or two; and so there he was! Would the gentlemen have a drink on him?

The greenhorn proudly produced a roll of bills from an inside pocket and was offering to pay, when he felt a hand on his shoulder and turned about. He found himself looking into a most suave and friendly face, belonging to a man who wore a flashy suit of plaids.

"By God!" cried the man of plaids, thrusting forth a friendly hand to the greenhorn, "but ain't I glad to meet a man from Indiana! Shake! I came from there myself! Barkeep, this treat's on me. It ain't often I meet a man from my own State!"

The man of plaids held forth expansively concerning the essential brotherhood of Indiana's sons. It developed that he came from Coal City, and that was only twenty miles from the Corners! Why, he knew the country thereabouts like he knew the wart on his hand! How the greenhorn's heart warmed toward the man of plaids as they walked out of the bar-room arm in arm!

When the two were outside the man of plaids cast a cautious eye about him, drew very close to the greenhorn and

continued: "Of course, my friend, you're looking for a claim, and right now let me put a flea in your ear. Don't you trust none of them in there!" He pointed a deprecatory thumb over his shoulder at the bar-room now filled with noisy laughter. "You're what they call a tenderfoot, you know; though I can see with one eye that it won't take you long to get your feet tough! Eh?" He poked a jovial finger into the young man's ribs. "Now I happen to own the real bonanza claim of these diggin's, and I can't work it 'cause I got to start back home. Yep, back to Indiany—Coal City. Mother's sick. Guess that's why I have such a feeling for you. Can't explain it no other way. Mothers and sisters and all that—sort of touching, you know. So when I heard you talking in there I said to myself, 'Here's a chance to do a good turn for somebody that'll appreciate it.' And so what am I going to do? Give you a claim where you can pick out all the damned gold dust you can pack away in a sack!"

The man of plaids lapsed into an eloquent silence and watched the effect of his words bloom like a flower in the face of his auditor. The greenhorn's eyes dilated, his breathing deepened; there was a perceptible stiffening of his spine and a slight, haughty curving of his lip. He saw gold! Gold! Great yellow floods of it! Already he was standing before his critics at the Corners grocery store. Already he had placed a heavy sack upon the counter. He stood with folded arms, calmly awaiting the dramatic moment of his crushing triumph. Now old Deacon Brown opens the sack—there is a gasp—an exclamation of wonder—

"But let me put another flea in your ear," broke in the man of plaids. "Don't mention this to a soul—not a single soul! They'll steal it! Like as not—" Here the man of plaids lifted a sinister right hand, imitating the act of firing a revolver and simulated the facial spasm of a man who had recently taken an ounce of hot lead into his system. "Not a word, mind you!" he went on. "Not a word to a soul! And when you get

a sackful—all you can carry—cut loose, vanish, go up in smoke! I mean, take to the woods and go fast!"

The greenhorn was ecstatic. What could he ever do in payment for this? As for getting away with the gold, once he had it—well, he would look after that! He was green, he knew, but he knew a thing or two all the same!

He rhapsodized on the theme of his heart, developing it with brilliant luxury of detail up to the glorious golden climax. Nellie and his mother ran through it like the recurring dominant chords of a melody. And, little by little, a tremulous bashful new note crept in. He spoke of Bessie.

Bessie? Oh, the man of plaids guessed who *that* was! And he was so good-natured about it that he inspired confidence, and the faint, tremulous, tentative note grew rich and full, until your heart would have leaped to hear the name. And oh, how charmingly the man of plaids played second to this music of youth!

That night the brothers slept together, talking long about the dear old State. And with the peep of day, carrying a sack and a pick, they were off into the woods. They walked rapidly down gulches, up hills, through dense jackpine thickets. Every now and then the man of plaids stopped short and put a questioning hand to his ear. "Hist!" he whispered. "No, it's only the echo of our footsteps. Thought somebody was following. We can't be too careful, you know!"

On they plunged into the wilderness. "Are we almost there?" gasped the greenhorn. "Yes," answered the man of plaids at length, "here we are at last. *Look!*" He pointed to the bank of a dry gully. The greenhorn looked and his eyes dilated; he gasped for breath.

A thin yellow streak was visible in the bank before him. "Take your pick and dig there," said the man of plaids. The greenhorn grasped the pick with trembling hands and dug. A thin glittering stream of yellow dust flowed down the bank and made a dazzling mass at his feet. He shrank

back with a feeling of awe that was half terror.

A stream of gold dust flowing at his feet! At one knock the doors of happiness had swung wide! Tears of joy sprang in his eyes and trickled down his cheeks, grown suddenly livid with the awfulness of it. In that breathless moment he repurchased the old farm, built a costly palace upon it, bought silk dresses without number, heard wonderful melodies played by the trained fingers of Nellie, married Bessie—struck the whole countryside dumb with wonder and admiration!

"My friend," broke in the man of plaids, "the stage starts in an hour, and I must go. Unfortunately, I haven't enough money, and mother may be dying. Now five hundred dollars——"

Mechanically, still staring at the thin, glittering stream before him, the dreamer reached into his inside pocket, drew out the roll of bills and cast it on the ground. Many minutes passed; minutes in which days, months, years flew like the notes of a song through the brain of the dreamer.

At length he fell forward upon the beautiful stuff, gathered it in his arms, put his hot face close to it and laughed deliriously. Suddenly he straightened up with terror in his face. Had anyone heard? Oh, the beautiful yellow stuff! What if someone had heard and it should be taken from him!

He heard only the dawn wind moaning in the pines and the chirp of a hidden bird. He was alone—the man of plaids had gone.

With the nervousness of dread he began gathering up this visible happiness that dazzled him. He scraped it up carefully and filled his sack so full that it would not tie. What should he do—throw away some of the precious stuff? He felt a pang of regret at the thought that he could not take it all.

He scooped out a double handful and looked wistfully upon it. How much was that—a hundred, a thousand, five thousand dollars? He faltered long in the act to throw it away—and ended by putting it in his pocket.

He now found that he could tie the sack. But could he carry it? The thought struck him cruelly. After many minutes of hesitation, he tried.

He could not even shoulder it! Ah, gold was very heavy; he remembered having heard that it was very heavy. With trembling hands he untied the knot and took out another double handful. Could he throw it away—a whole handful of glittering happiness? What joy might not this much bring to mother and Nellie? He put that also in the pocket of his coat.

But still he could not shoulder the sack. With a sudden spasmodic effort of the will, he closed his eyes and dipped repeatedly into his treasure and cast it away. After all, three-fourths of it was better than none. But every thrusting of the hand into the sack was like a stab.

Again he tied the sack. At last he could lift it to his shoulder. But the weight was crushing. Ah, the dear weight—how he loved it!

He tottered off into the dense timber to the East. East—that was toward Johnson Corners. He would go East. He remembered having a compass in his pocket, feeling a little proud at his forethought in buying it. But now through the dense pines filtered the glow of the dawn. He tottered on with his face to the glow, and every step took him nearer Johnson Corners.

The glow crept up the pines, and the bearer of the precious sack became aware that his breath was coming painfully, that his temples were throbbing as though they would burst. He set the sack down to rest. Certainly it was very heavy, but he was strong. He would not throw away another ounce—not even the smallest pinch!

He shouldered it again and tottered manfully on into the wilderness. Thus with frequent rests he forged slowly into the East. The sun rose high and sank and the stars peeped in through the rifts in the foliage. Then an overpowering weakness seized the toiler, and he lay down with his head on the sack.

How dreadfully quiet the night was!

He had heard of bears and mountain lions. He shuddered at the thought of them. But it was not the mere thought of death that made him shudder. It was the fear that death might take this precious weight from his shoulders.

A spirit of dauntlessness nerved him. He drew his shiny revolvers and lay very still. He would fight—fight! Oh, how he would fight! Let anything stand between him and his treasure now! He was ready.

He swooned away, and was at last in Johnson Corners—in the old church down at the Corners. Bessie was there beside him, dressed like a queen. The preacher was saying something that made his heart leap wildly—and it was dawn! He blinked in the gray light for a moment, then leaped up, shouldered his sack and plunged in again into the glow. But his shoulders pained him a little—oh, just a very little! He had often been as sore as that after pitching hay all day! He would get over that.

Really, the sack was not so heavy, after all. But nevertheless he often set it down panting. And when the sun broke through the tops of the trees he remembered that he had not eaten. Why, he must eat—that was the reason he grew so tired under the load! He had not eaten! But what should he eat?

A squirrel frisked and chattered on a branch above his head. Could he kill it with a revolver? He would try. He drew one of his shiny guns and took good aim.

But what if someone should be near and hear the report of the shot? He put the gun back in its holster and shouldering his sack forged ahead. There were wild berries growing all about him. He would eat berries. Berries were really very good food; and how delicious these berries were!

But at regularly decreasing intervals he was obliged to set the sack down. That night his sleep was filled with wonderful organ melodies and all Johnson Corners was gathered together to hear Nellie play. And his mother was very conspicuous in that vast

through—such a shiny silk dress as she wore! It made Mrs. Jones, the banker's wife, look very dowdy indeed.

He got up his morning much stiffer than before, and when he tried to shoulder the sack he groaned.

Perhaps it *was* too heavy, after all. One shouldn't want too much. One might get nothing at all if one wanted too much. Wouldn't it be wise to—he recoiled from the thought—yes, to take out just a little?

For an hour a silent battle raged within him, and then, with a sense of choking, he untied the sack and dipped out a half-dozen handfuls. Hastily retying the sack, he summoned all his strength and hurried away from the spot. He dared not look upon all that wasted wealth. How much was it that he had thrown away? But then, was he not carrying untold wealth? Ah, that merely showed how very rich he was! Poor men cannot throw gold away like that! This thought exhilarated him, and he forged ahead with a lighter heart.

Five days passed. In this time he had eaten berries and drunk from occasional streams. But on the morning of the sixth day he struggled in vain to shoulder the load. He tried repeatedly, but his muscles refused to lift it to his shoulder.

He buried his face in the sack and sobbed unmanfully. Would it all go like that—little by little? And he had carried it so far already; it meant so much to him.

He lightened the load until he could get it to his shoulder and pushed on into the East. As he went, he comforted himself with the determination not to sacrifice any more—not a pinch more! Not a pinch—no, not if he should die under it!

The sack was now less than half full.

Many days passed—he kept no count of them—and still his determination gave him strength for the load that seemed to increase with every step. And with the nights came dreams, as ever, only they began to take on gray, melancholy tones and sounds of moan-

ing went through them. All through the weary days he turned these dreams over and over in his mind until they haunted him. And one night he saw his mother and Nellie very plainly. They were both weeping. And he thought feverishly: "It is because they have not heard from me!" Then the dream changed, and he was standing in the grocery store down at the Corners and all the old faces were there, turned expectantly upon the sack which he had just placed on the counter. He saw old Deacon Brown go up to the sack, untie it and thrust his hand in. "*Why, it's empty!*" said the deacon, and all the loungers roared with laughter.

Whereat the dreamer awoke, staring into a pale sky, and heard the multitudinous chatter of birds in the forest about him. Eagerly he untied the sack and thrust his hand into it that he might give the lie to the dream. It was all there—the beautiful, glittering, priceless stuff! He let it run slowly through his fingers the better to taste the unutterable joy of possession.

All that day he struggled under the load with a heart almost blithe. It was as though he had really lost his treasure and regained it, so vivid had been the dream. He seemed very much nearer home that day, although the load seemed heavier. But he felt stronger to bear it.

But in the weary fag-end of the long afternoon he topped the summit of the last hill, and there before him spread a vast and treeless plain rimmed with the gray mist of distance. His heart sank within him. He dropped the sack to the ground and stood staring blankly at the far horizon. Somewhere beyond that rim of mist, and then yet other rims of mist, lay home. Could he ever cross that long, lonesome stretch? For the first time he felt the terrible meaning of *distance*. Tears ran down the deepening hollows of his cheeks as he stared upon this motionless, pitiless, treeless waste. It had the calm, stern, inexorable look of death.

One can travel an endless trail and still hope, so long as he cannot see the

way lengthening before him. Heretofore he had been constantly in the forest, traversing a continuous series of little spaces. But *this*—

Why should he go on, after all? It would be so much easier to die.

Die! His wan face flushed with a sudden anger at the treacherous thought.

Die?

And what would become of mother and Nellie and Bessie? *Die!* And the farm sold? And the money gone? And all the neighbors wagging their heads and saying they knew it would be so?

No! He would not die! But he would rest the balance of the day, and in the morning he would be strong as ever again.

But the next morning found him weak and stiff in the joints, though the dream was very strong in him again. And, haltingly, ever conscious that the weight at his back was cruelly heavy, he pushed on toward the sun that made a path of fire ahead of him. Somewhere down that interminable path of fire was Johnson Corners.

As the day advanced, he became conscious of sharper pangs of hunger than he had ever known before. This struck him with terror. In the forest there had been an abundance of wild berries; but *here?*

He remembered that it had once been his habit to pray. But that seemed years ago—when he was very, very young. He felt that he had grown very old. But now he remembered the teachings of his mother. He breathed prayers pleadingly into the waste about him. He prayed for food. *Meat!* His gnawing stomach cried out for red meat.

After hours he neared a scrubby clump of plum bushes that clung to the arid bank of a dry gully. Suddenly he was aroused from a morbid dream of starvation by a snorting in the thicket. A deer plunged out and raced across the plain before him. With the quick instinct that prompts a hungry beast to kill, he dropped the

sack, snatched a revolver from his belt, and emptied it at the flying animal. The deer topped the barren summit of a little raise, and dropped out of sight. He snatched the other gun from his belt and fired frantically into the empty space before him. Then he flung the smoking weapon to the ground and cursed savagely.

When he lifted the sack he felt childishly angry with it for being so heavy. He would make it lighter. It *was* too heavy! What was the use in saying it wasn't! With a sort of fury he untied the knot and poured a fourth of the precious stuff on the ground. Then he shouldered the lessened weight and pushed on rapidly, trying to believe that he didn't care.

The sun rose high; the far undulations of the baked plain wavered feverishly in the heat, as though seen through fluttering gauze. He watched the blue-gray patch of shade at his feet slowly elongating into a shadowy finger that pointed East. And all the while feverish, snatchy visions of pumpkin pies and dumplings and corn-bread came and went in his head.

Suddenly his half-dream state was broken by a sound of snarling, snapping, yelping, as of many dogs fighting. He found himself near the brow of a little hill. The sun was a blotch of yellow flame on the jagged purple rim behind him, and his thin gray shadow stretched up the slope into the sky ahead.

He toiled on up the slope and saw in the green valley of a creek below him a pack of wolves fighting over a meal. Now again his hunger became an active passion, firing his will. He loaded a revolver and, shouting hoarsely, he emptied it in the direction of the fighting pack. The wolves scattered, whining, drooping their tails like whipped dogs.

He found the torn carcass of a fawn in the valley; its flesh was still warm. That night he sat by a fire and feasted. It was the first fire he had made, for he had no fear of men in this wide waste. And he was very happy. Here was food for days if taken sparingly. And how sweet the muddy water of the little

creek was! It ran very thin among dying reeds; but he scooped out a little basin and thought of the spring that bubbled out under the old oak as he drank.

Often in the night he saw slinking dusky figures against the sky on the ridge above him. They howled dismally at the man in the valley who feasted on their kill and sang so merrily.

But in the gray dawn he awoke feeling sluggish and sore and depressed. Then a cruel perplexity confronted him. How could he carry the sack and the meat too?

Once he thought he would eat all he could and abandon the rest. But the memory of his hunger cried that down. What should he do? Lighten the sack again? It had already grown so lank that it set snugly about his shoulders without support. He argued long with himself.

No food—no gold!

Some food—some gold!

He ended by taking the meat and three-fourths of the remainder of the once plump sack.

The meat of the fawn lasted him five days, and during that time the contents of the sack remained untouched, for his hunger steadily lightened his load. During this time he had succeeded in finding water at least once a day.

But, with the last of the meat, water failed him. He now found himself in a perfectly flat tableland. His dragging feet stirred up a hot, acrid dust that choked him. And for the first time he knew how thirst can dominate hunger.

The day passed, and still the arid flat stretched about him—unchanged. He seemed to have stood still all day. Only the dull aching of his back and limbs gave the lie to this featureless plain that taunted him with having remained motionless all day.

The night flitted past, leaving no sense of duration, and with the dawn he was up again, toiling under the sack. His thirst had grown upon him during the night. It tortured him cruelly. So he forced himself to think

of that far hour of his triumph that he might not think of his thirst.

All day he trudged along, painting the glorious mental picture; and when the cool of the evening came it had all grown up very plain before him; so plain, indeed, that he already stood in the grocery store, feeling a little light-headed, to be sure, but nevertheless victorious. He talked aloud, it was so real.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed hoarsely. "Thought I was a fool, eh? Thought farming was a pretty good business, did you? Just run your old bony fingers through *that*, Deacon Brown! Oh, you needn't wag your old goat's beard like that! It's gold! Just *feel* it! Walk up, gentlemen, and take a look into that sack! Ho, ho, ho! Where's the farm hereabouts that you can raise *that* on?"

The scene changed.

"Look, mother! Look, Nellie! Thousands and thousands of dollars! I got it myself! Oh, I had three times as much as that, but I got so tired and thirsty that I couldn't pack it. How'll the Joneses feel, do you reckon? We'll buy back the farm, and you won't ever have to work again, mother! And you can take lessons and lessons and lessons, Nellie!"

Exalted with his words, he had lifted his face to the Eastern sky. He stopped short, gasped! There in front of him, only a little way ahead, he saw a sparkling river flowing through green pastures!

All the ache and heaviness of the limbs left him. He felt light as a feather and powerful. He cried aloud with joy. At last, here was a river—*water! water!*

He set out at a trot, no longer feeling the weight at his back. At last he had won! He sang snatches of old songs he had learned at the singing bees. His voice was hoarse, and the blithe words came clumsily from his thick tongue. But he heard only the singing in his brain.

Suddenly a thin, oily film passed over the river and pastures. Strange gaps opened here and there in the scene.

Then the whole became agitated, indistinct, as though seen by a bleared eye.

He looked again. There was nothing ahead but the arid, featureless flat and the darkening sky.

That night was filled with the hideous laughter of a hundred grotesque deacons who stared into an empty sack. And somewhere in the burning hollow of a strange world he could hear the moaning of women.

Suns set and rose, and day was scarcely distinguished from night. Every morning a little more was taken from the sack, until a child could have shouldered it.

The man no longer tried to get it to his shoulder. He carried it limply in his arms before him. And every morning as he lightened his load, he prayed the same prayer: "Oh, God, let me be stout enough to pack it!"

But one day, when he had grown too weak to feel joy, he came to a place where the tableland sloped abruptly into a river valley. He saw below him a cluster of rude houses. It was a trading post. Slowly, painfully, he made his way into the town. He found his way into the only store, and

reaching a lean, trembling hand into his pocket, he cast a handful of the precious stuff on the counter.

"Eat—drink," he stammered.

The trader stared strangely upon the bent, haggard thing before him, that should have been twenty years old but, somehow, was sixty.

"Why, what is this?" said the trader, brushing the precious stuff about with careless fingers.

At last the dull embers of the old joy flared up into flame, and a light of triumph shot across the ashen face of the man who had borne the sack.

"It's gold!" he croaked. "See! I've got almost a sack of it!"

"You cursed fool," said the trader, "that's nothing but yellow mica—powdered yellow mica!"

When my friend, the philosopher, had finished I mused for some time over his story. At length I said: "And did that really happen? Is it a true story?"

He gave me a pitying smile.

"Did it happen, you ask?" said he. "Perhaps; I don't know as to that. Is it true? Yes, certainly it is true. For you must know, my friend, Truth does not happen—it exists!"



COR CORDIUM

By Arthur Ketchum

DEEP in my heart I shut one thought of you,
Deeper than Love may look,
As one who lays a June-red rose between
The pages of a book.

Of old and lovely legends read no more
For memory and pain,
Yet knows the whiteness of one page must bear
A sweetness and a stain.

A PAINTED ANGEL

By Allan Munier

"**I** LOOKED in at the exhibition a while this afternoon, Cicely."

"Again? How ridiculous!"

"But I can't keep away from that picture. Perhaps you don't understand—it means something very special to me."

"But, you absurd boy, you'll have it at home presently."

"Meantime I like to hear what people say about it. They do say a lot. There was a chap with the head of Jouffroy's 'Idealist' there today and I heard him say to his companion—evidently an artist: 'The striking thing about the face is its angelic quality—mind you, I don't mean the saintly, conscious look of the average winged thing, nor the vacant innocence of the child-face. It's more than that—well, a woman with a face like that couldn't leave the heights.' Your face, Cicely—the face of an angel!"

Modesty, or the heat from the fire, had turned her cheeks a sudden crimson.

"Not an angel, dear boy—only the merest woman with all a woman's weakness, all a woman's cowardice!"

The tone chilled him—angered him as though another had spoken.

"Cowardly, Cicely—you! You sha'n't say such things! Take it back, now—take it all back."

"Yes, yes," she laughed ashamedly, and would say no more; but let him take her in his arms and kiss the hot cheeks, the mouth, the eyes, the bright hair. Then—it was disgracefully late and she had forgotten some orders for tomorrow which must be given; and she believed she shouldn't sit up any longer, for truly she was worn to shreds,

what with dressmakers and milliners and the like.

When she was gone he sat long alone in the silence, content to finish his pipe, thinking of her. She was so good to him—understood him so well! She was demonstrative, too, in her own elusive way; and yet did her frequent frank outbursts really lead to his better understanding of her? While her little feet had wandered into that windowless chamber back of the mind where even the well-beloved oftentimes encounters the flaming sword, could he really feel that he had gained much ground in the intimate human heart of her?

When the picture came home it hung in his study. Everyone admitted the likeness; yet looking from it to the reality, did one miss a subtle quality?—not of beauty indeed, for the artist had nowhere exaggerated that, nor of spirituality. Perhaps it was a radiance in the pictured purity—perhaps in the original there was something harder, colder. Yet consciously he missed nothing, and if at times he wondered what had become of the warmth and vivacity her girlhood had seemed to promise, he put the question by as disloyal, believing that her nature had developed beautifully, tranquilly, along spiritual lines; content that all the passion of adoration should be his.

So sometimes coming unexpectedly into a room where she sat before the fire in the half-light, it puzzled him to catch, bending suddenly over her, a glimpse of a Cicely he had never known. The eyes, that looked not at but beyond him, glowed with an intensity of feeling he had never thought to find

there; the mouth was tender, the face graciously sweet with some dear hope or recollection. Yet his touch it was that broke the spell, his presence that brought the chill; while his eyes sought eagerly the meaning in her own it vanished, and she was again the Cicely he knew—clever and kind, but with a multitude of things to do that needed immediate attention.

Hours later, alone in his den, he would catch himself counting the possibilities of a broader and braver life under the spur of the ardor, the fire, the comprehension in those compensating eyes. But the eyes of the pictured angel on the wall seemed always to reproach him for his memory of the vivid human face with its instant's revelation of conscious human passion.

"Cicely," he asked, with an amused smile, one evening, "do you never part with that bauble even for a day?"

She had removed from her neck a ribbon with something hanging to it, in order to replace it with a necklace of pearls, and was now fastening the ribbon and its pendant in some ingenious woman's way of concealment within the décolletage.

"Never, even for an instant!" she laughed back.

"I really believe it is the key to your heart."

"Who knows?"

"What a child you are about some things; and most of all about that absurd little golden key, which I'm sure is too tiny for the smallest lock ever made. Why are you so fond of it, dear? Is it a gift?—I don't remember your first having it."

"Yes, a gift."

"Tell me—will you?"

"Of course; but not now. Do you realize that I shall be very cross if you make me miss half the dancing?"

"I shall be patient. Meanwhile—it's not so very late—would it be a great deal of trouble to change your gown?"

"Change my gown!" and she glanced down in dismay at the "creation" it had taken her so long to get into.

"Yes; that's what I came up for—to ask you. I didn't suppose you'd be dressed so soon. I have a special fancy for having you wear the white gown in which you posed for the picture. Of course, if you would rather not——"

"But I scarcely think the gown is quite fresh, dear!" Her eyes sought the maid's, which danced with assent.

"*Mais oui, madame.* I have eet—how you call—renovate, *n'est-ce pas?*—and madame ees one angel een zat robe."

Françoise always aired her English for the benefit of monsieur.

"Never mind—it will be a trouble; and it was only a notion."

"Not at all; if the gown is fresh I shall be glad to please you."

He lingered while the change was effected—a change necessitating also a removal and a readjustment of the little golden key. Her back was toward him; but in the mirror of the dressing-table her eyes met his unseeing, and dropped again to her task, yet not before he had caught in them the flash of that singular human light he felt so helpless to fit into his conception of her.

So the days passed; and their world looked on complacently and voted them its model pair. They could afford to ignore its opinions, to give small heed to its observances, to dispense with its flattery. Yet they seldom availed themselves of their immunity from criticism to take unconventional flights. The daily life of routine went on happily enough, and was so definitely fixed that any departure would have seemed cause for alarm.

Whether they were dining out or at home, six o'clock found Cicely invariably at her toilet; a laborer's day was over at six, she declared, and so should hers be; and no allurement of feminine concerns could succeed in making her swerve from her rule. Passing her door a little later, it was his habit to stop in for a momentary interchange of news before proceeding to dress. As she was never ill he could not remember

that he had ever missed her from her place.

It was therefore with something of a shock that on one wretched, drizzly, chill day in early March he entered at the usual hour to find only Françoise, fussing impatiently to hide her worry over the non-appearance of madame.

"Madame have ordaire ze carriage for four of ze afternoon, and she have not yet return."

"A day like this! But didn't she say where she was going?"

"Nossing, monsieur. Ordinairement madame say to me 'Françoise, I go here—I go zere; I return by six certainement.' Today, not one word she say to me; and she look—she look ver' ill, monsieur."

"Oh, she'll be back in a few minutes. The weather—she's stopped somewhere and forgotten the time." With which reassurance—that reassured neither Françoise nor himself—he departed, but not to dress. Be-thinking him of some afternoon affair at his sister's he walked over in the now steady downpour, to find she had not been there and to be awakened by his sister's astonished questions to the fact that he was making rather an ass of himself.

"But, my dear boy, it isn't half after seven o'clock! Is it so inconceivable that she has been detained?"

So he walked back, and while yet some distance away perceived through the drizzle a carriage at his door. Panic-stricken, he began to run; till he recognized his own and calm returned, with an indulgent smile for his fond folly.

Relief made his step almost jaunty as he turned in at the gate; how Cicely would chaff him when he told her! Before the door wide open and abandoned his face went white again—there was mud on the stairs, great cakes of it!

He must go up softly—he must make no noise. What a devil of a way it was! The sweat rolled from his face, mixed with the chill March rain. At last the landing; and then her door. His collar was so tight; a fumbling hand went up

to loosen it, when—the door opened and closed. Françoise cast him one wild look and fled, making extraordinary choking sounds into her apron. Was she laughing at him? Of course he must be a sight—all that rain—and for the first time he thought of his hat and removed it, examining it curiously.

The next minute his eye was taking in the details of the disordered room—clothes torn and shockingly muddy pitched upon the floor; a tall stranger with a glass of—was it water?—in his hand; a woman in a nurse's cap—he wondered how they had been found so soon, and they looked so at home! All this in an instant's flash; and then the white bed—the still face with its closed eyes!

The doctor's account was brief and in the lowest of tones. The pair had run away. The man had been quick—had caught them after the upset and they had not gone a yard; but she had been jammed under the overturned vehicle. The man had extricated her and driven to the nearest doctor's office—his own. There he had done what he could, but thought it wisest to get her home with the least possible delay, and had brought a nurse along. If Mr. Arsdale would telephone for the family physician . . .

"Will she—can—is it serious?"

"I'm afraid—I can't give you much hope. She may regain consciousness, but it will be for only a few hours."

The eyes in the white face opened suddenly upon them and the lips moved.

"Thank God!" breathed Cicely, and wept weakly, abandonedly, though not from pain: the poor crushed body from waist to feet was paralyzed and would never know pain again.

She spoke but once again afterward, though she was fully conscious for the promised "few hours," which were a scant two. His eyes that never left her face saw wave after wave break over it—yearning, regret, passion, rebellion, fear.

"Cicely, my little Cicely!" he whispered with a bursting heart, knowing she was fast slipping from him.

LE NID DE ROSSIGNOLS

Par Théophile Gautier

AUTOUR du château, il y avait un beau parc.

Dans le parc, il y avait des oiseaux de toutes sortes: rossignols, merles, fauvettes; tous les oiseaux de la terre s'étaient donnés rendez-vous dans le parc.

Au printemps, c'était un ramage à ne pas s'entendre; chaque feuille cachait un nid, chaque arbre était un orchestre. Tous les petits musiciens emplumés faisaient assaut à qui mieux mieux. Les uns pépiaient, les autres roucoulaient; ceux-ci faisaient des trilles et des cadences perlées, ceux-là découpaient des floritures ou brodaient des points d'orgue; de véritables musiciens n'auraient pas si bien fait.

Mais dans le château il y avait deux belles cousines qui chantaient mieux à elles deux que tous les oiseaux du parc; l'une s'appelait Fleurette et l'autre Isabeau. Toutes deux étaient belles, désirables et bien en point, et les dimanches, quand elles avaient leurs belles robes, si leurs blanches épaules n'eussent pas montré qu'elles étaient de véritables filles, on les aurait prises pour des anges; il n'y manquait que les plumes. Quand elles chantaient, le vieux sire de Maulevrier, leur oncle, les tenait quelquefois par la main, de peur qu'il ne leur prit la fantaisie de s'envoler.

Je vous laisse à penser les beaux coups de lance qui se faisaient aux carrousels et aux tournois en l'honneur de Fleurette et d'Isabeau. Leur réputation de beauté et de talent avait fait le tour de l'Europe, et cependant elles n'en étaient pas plus fières; elles vivaient dans la retraite, ne voyant guère d'autres personnes que le petit page Valentin, bel enfant aux cheveux blonds, et le sire de Maulevrier, vieil-

lard tout chenu, tout hâlé et tout cassé d'avoir porté soixante ans son harnois de guerre.

Elles passaient leur temps à jeter de la graine aux petits oiseaux, à dire des prières, et principalement à étudier les œuvres des maîtres, et à répéter ensemble quelque motet, madrigal, villanelle, ou telle autre musique; elles avaient aussi des fleurs qu'elles arrosaient et soignaient elles-mêmes. Leur vie s'écoulait dans ces douces et poétiques occupations de jeune fille; elles se tenaient dans l'ombre et loin des regards du monde, et cependant le monde s'occupait d'elles. Ni le rossignol ni la rose ne se peuvent cacher; leur chant et leur odeur les trahissent toujours. Nos deux cousines étaient à la fois deux rossignols et deux roses.

Il vint des ducs, des princes, pour les demander en mariage; l'empereur de Trébizonde et le sultan d'Egypte envoyèrent des ambassadeurs pour proposer leur alliance au sire de Maulevrier; les deux cousines ne se laissaient pas d'être filles et ne voulurent pas en entendre parler. Peut-être avaient-elles senti par un secret instinct que leur mission ici-bas était d'être filles et de chanter, et qu'elles y dérogeraient en faisant autre chose.

Elles étaient venues toutes petites dans ce manoir. La fenêtre de leur chambre donnait sur le parc, et elles avaient été bercées par le chant des oiseaux. A peine se tenaient-elles debout que le vieux Blondiau, ménétrier du sire, avait posé leur petites mains sur les touches d'ivoire du virginal; elles n'avaient pas eu d'autre hochet et avaient su chanter avant de parler; elles chantaient comme les autres respirent; cela leur était naturel.

Cette éducation avait singulièrement

influé sur leur caractère. Leur enfance harmonieuse les avait séparées de l'enfance turbulente et bavarde. Elles n'avaient jamais poussé un cri aigu ni une plainte discordante; elles pleuraient en mesure et gémissaient d'accord. Le sens musical, développé chez elles aux dépens des autres, les rendait peu sensibles à ce qui n'était pas musique. Elles flottaient dans un vague mélodieux et ne percevaient presque le monde réel que par les sons. Elles comprenaient admirablement bien le bruissement du feuillage, le murmure des eaux, le tintement de l'horloge, le soupir du vent dans la cheminée, le bourdonnement du rouet, la goutte de pluie tombant sur la vitre frémissante, toutes les harmonies extérieures ou intérieures; mais elles n'éprouvaient pas, je dois le dire, un grand enthousiasme à la vue d'un soleil couchant, et elles étaient aussi peu en état d'apprécier une peinture que si leurs beaux yeux bleus et noirs eussent été couverts d'une taie épaisse. Elles avaient la maladie de la musique; elles en rêvaient, elles en perdaient le boire et le manger; elles n'aimaient rien autre chose au monde. Si fait, elles aimaient encore autre chose, c'était Valentin et leurs fleurs; Valentin, parce qu'il ressemblait au roses; les roses, parce qu'elles ressemblaient à Valentin. Mais cet amour était tout à fait sur le second plan. Il est vrai que Valentin n'avait que treize ans. Leur plus grand plaisir était de chanter le soir à leur fenêtre la musique qu'elles avaient composée dans la journée.

Les maîtres les plus célèbres venaient de très loin pour les entendre et lutter avec elles. Ils n'avaient pas plutôt écouté une mesure qu'ils brisaient leurs instruments et déchiraient leur partition en s'avouant vaincus. En effet, c'était une musique si agréable, si mélodieuse, que les chérubins du ciel venaient à la croisée avec les autres musiciens et l'apprenaient par cœur, pour la chanter au bon Dieu.

Un soir de mai, les deux cousines chantaient un motet à deux voix; jamais motif plus heureux n'avait été plus heureusement travaillé et rendu.

Un rossignol du parc, tapi sur un rosier, les avait écoutées attentivement. Quand elles eurent fini, il s'approcha de la fenêtre et leur dit, en son langage de rossignol: "Je voudrais faire un combat de chant avec vous."

Les deux cousines répondirent qu'elles le voulaient bien, et qu'il eût à commencer.

Le rossignol commença. C'était un maître rossignol. Sa petite gorge s'enflait, ses ailes battaient, tout son corps frémissait; c'étaient des roulades à n'en plus finir, des fusées, des arpèges, des gammes chromatiques; il montait et descendait, il filait les sons; il perlait les cadences avec une pureté désespérante; on eût dit que sa voix avait des ailes comme son corps. Il s'arrêta, certain d'avoir remporté la victoire.

Les deux cousines se firent entendre à leur tour; elles se surpassèrent. Le chant du rossignol semblait, auprès du leur, le gazouillement d'un passereau.

Le virtuose ailé tenta un dernier effort; il chanta une romance d'amour, puis il exécuta une fanfare brillante qu'il couronna par une aigrette de notes hautes, vibrantes et aiguës, hors de la portée de toute voie humaine.

Les deux cousines, sans se laisser effrayer par ce tour de force, tournèrent le feuillet de leur livre de musique, et répliquèrent au rossignol de telle sorte que sainte Cécile, qui les écoutait du haut du ciel, en devint pâle de jalousie et laissa tomber sa contrebasse sur la terre.

Le rossignol essaya bien encore de chanter, mais cette lutte l'avait totalement épuisé: l'haleine lui manquait, ses plumes étaient hérissées, ses yeux se fermaient malgré lui; il allait mourir.

— Vous chantez mieux que moi, dit-il aux deux cousines, et l'orgueil de vouloir vous surpasser me coûte la vie. Je vous demande une chose: j'ai un nid; dans ce nid, il y a trois petits; c'est le troisième églantier dans la grande allée, du côté de la pièce d'eau; envoyez-les prendre, élevez-les et apprenez-leur à chanter comme vous; puisque je vais mourir.

Ayant dit cela, le rossignol mourut. Les deux cousines le pleurèrent fort, car il avait bien chanté. Elles appelè-

rent Valentin, le petit page aux cheveux blonds, et lui dirent où était le nid. Valentin, qui était un malin petit drôle, trouva facilement la place; il mit le nid dans sa poitrine et l'apporta sans encombre. Fleurette et Isabeau, accoudées au balcon, l'attendaient avec impatience. Valentin arriva bientôt, tenant le nid dans ses mains. Les trois petits passaient la tête, ouvraient le bec tout grand. Les jeunes filles s'apitoyèrent sur ces petits orphelins, et leur donnèrent la becquée chacune à son tour. Quand ils furent un peu plus grands, elles commencèrent leur éducation musicale, comme elles l'avaient promis au rossignol vaincu.

C'était merveille de voir comme ils étaient privés, comme ils chantaient bien. Ils s'en allaient voletant par la chambre, et se perchaient tantôt sur la tête d'Isabeau, tantôt sur l'épaule de Fleurette. Ils se posaient devant le livre de musique, et l'on eût dit, en vérité, qu'ils savaient déchiffrer les notes, tant ils regardaient les blanches et les noires d'un air d'intelligence. Ils avaient appris tous les airs de Fleurette et d'Isabeau, et ils commençaient à en improviser eux-mêmes de fort jolis.

Les deux cousines vivaient de plus en plus dans la solitude, et le soir on entendait s'échapper de leur chambre des sons d'une mélodie surnaturelle. Les rossignols, parfaitement instruits, faisaient leur partie dans le concert, et ils chantaient presque aussi bien que leurs maîtresses, qui, elles-mêmes, avaient fait de grands progrès.

Leurs voix prenaient chaque jour un éclat extraordinaire, et vibraient d'une façon métallique et cristalline au-dessus des registres de la voix naturelle. Les jeunes filles maigrissaient à vue d'œil; leurs belles couleurs se fanaient; elles étaient devenues pâles comme des agates et presque aussi transparentes. Le sire de Maulevrier voulait les empêcher de chanter, mais il ne put gagner cela sur elles.

Aussitôt qu'elles avaient prononcé quelques mesures, une petite tache rouge se dessinait sur leurs pommettes, et s'élargissait jusqu'à ce qu'elles eussent fini; alors la tache dispa-

raissait, mais une sueur froide coulait de leur peau, leurs lèvres tremblaient comme si elles eussent eu la fièvre.

Au reste, leur chant était plus beau que jamais; il avait quelque chose qui n'était pas de ce monde, et, à entendre cette voix sonore et puissante sortir de ces deux frères jeunes filles, il n'était pas difficile de prévoir ce qui arriverait, que la musique briserait l'instrument.

Elles le comprirent elles-mêmes, et se mirent à toucher leur virginal, qu'elles avaient abandonné pour la vocalisation. Mais, une nuit, la fenêtre était ouverte, les oiseaux gazouillaient dans le parc, la brise soupirait harmonieusement; il y avait tant de musique dans l'air, qu'elles ne purent résister à la tentation d'exécuter un duo qu'elles avaient composé la veille.

Ce fut le chant du cygne, un chant merveilleux tout trempé de pleurs, montant jusqu'au sommet des plus inaccessibles de la gamme, et redescendant l'échelle des notes jusqu'au dernier degré; quelque chose d'étincelant et d'inouï, un déluge de trilles, une pluie embrasée de traits chromatiques, un feu d'artifice musical impossible à décrire; mais cependant la petite tache rouge s'agrandissait singulièrement et leur couvrait presque toutes les joues. Les trois rossignols les regardaient et les écoutaient avec une singulière anxiété; ils palpitaient des ailes, ils allaient et venaient, et ne se pouvaient tenir en place. Enfin, elles arrivèrent à la dernière phrase du morceau; leur voix prit un caractère de sonorité si étrange, qu'il était facile de comprendre que ce n'étaient plus des créatures vivantes qui chantaient. Les rossignols avaient pris la volée. Les deux cousines étaient mortes; leurs âmes étaient parties avec la dernière note. Les rossignols montèrent droit au ciel pour porter ce chant suprême au bon Dieu, qui les garda tous dans son paradis pour lui exécuter la musique des deux cousines.

Le bon Dieu fit plus tard, avec ces trois rossignols, les âmes de Palestrina, de Cimarosa et du chevalier Gluck.

THE WAY

By W. Carey Wonderly

AND so they were married. Aunt Faith, to be sure, protested feebly against this natural outcome of things, declaring that her niece knew little of great cities and less of actors, but Nelly was very much in love and Williams a most persistent lover; and so they were married.

The ceremony was performed at the Methodist chapel where Nelly had taught a Sunday-school class and where Aunt Faith was reckoned a deaconess, and all Greenhill Centre assembled, first at the church and later at the little cottage, where a wonderful wedding breakfast was served. There were those present who looked askance at the groom, but Williams was such a quiet, unobtrusive little man, wholly devoted to Nelly, that Greenhill Centre soon found itself slapping him on the back and welcoming him with open arms as one of themselves.

And Williams was happy. In truth, he had never before believed that any sane man could be so happy as he was. He had won Nelly, the sweetest, dearest little girl in all the world, and what more could he or any man desire?

He stood quietly on one side of the great living-room and watched her as she flitted to and fro among the guests, a kind word, a sweet smile for everybody. Mentally he drew a comparison between her, his wife, and the other women he had known, the women of his profession, and then and there he took a vow that Nelly should never set foot upon the stage.

"Never, God bless her, never!" he said, with a quiet finality.

When, three months before, the season had come to a brilliant finish

with much profit to the management and great bodily pain and suffering to the company, the doctors had told Williams that he must go away to the country and take a good long rest or he would be in a hospital when the troupe assembled for next year's work. It had been a hard season, rough on the men and women alike, and the little comedian was pretty well played out; so, refusing an eight weeks' engagement to play the Summer parks, he had packed his trunk and come to Greenhill Centre. The rest was history.

Now there remained six weeks before he would be obliged to report for rehearsal, and Williams determined to spend those weeks here in the country. At first Aunt Faith had intimated that a "wedding tour" was considered the correct thing in polite circles, and Nelly had suggested something about "seeing the city," but Williams was firm—he wanted Nelly to himself and right here in Greenhill Centre until the day came for rehearsal.

And so they stayed and were happy. They were always together—at church fairs, quilting parties, husking bees, always together, Nelly and Williams, the girl brimful of life and laughter, the man silent and backward, contented to follow his wife with his funny little blue eyes, adoration in his every glance.

"Would you rather stay home, dear?" Nelly asked him once. "All these fairs and things must seem pretty tame to you after knowing city folks and ways. If you'd rather not go——"

Williams opened wide his funny eyes. "Why, I was just thinking how kind everybody was to us, Nelly! Folks ain't like this in the city. The best a

girl gets there is a bowl of chop suey and a bottle o' suds——"

"A—what?" cried the girl, with comical unbelief.

Williams wiped the perspiration from his brow before he answered. "Nothing, dearie; don't mind me, baby; it was only some of my fun—my—nonsense."

"Oh! Something like you say on the stage?" she suggested gleefully.

"Something," he told her feebly.

"But what does it mean?" she demanded.

"It don't mean anything—it's only foolish talk. You mustn't listen to those things, baby, 'cause I don't want you to. They ain't nice and I shouldn't have said them. You don't remember them, Nelly?" he added anxiously.

"Why, no, it sounded like—I hardly know what, to me," she laughed.

And then she stooped and kissed him because she was a little taller than he, and the cloud lifted from the man's face and he was happy again. But Williams told himself that night the very thing which he had told himself many times before—that Nelly must stay away from the theatre and its people. Only he didn't quite see how the thing was possible.

During this last week at Greenhill Centre Williams turned over in his mind a dozen different schemes. Almost he was persuaded to leave Nelly with Aunt Faith until the season was over and he could come back to her again next Summer, but it was August now and June had just left them and would be a long time again in coming. No, he couldn't leave her, couldn't say good-bye; why, he wanted her every day, every minute in the day. No, he couldn't leave her with Aunt Faith. He thought it over until his head ached and spun around like a top, and even then he had reached no satisfactory conclusion.

Once he said to his wife: "Nelly, how would you like to stay here with your Aunt Faith and not go to New York with me? I'll come back again next Summer, you know."

"Dearest!" It was a cry in which pain and reproach rose paramount.

"Do you want to go then?" he cried, a note of gladness in his voice.

"Don't you want me to go with you?" she asked wonderingly, a little hurt, at what she hardly knew herself.

"Want you? Why, baby, I want you—all the time!" he cried, his pale face flushing. "I want you all the time, only—! It's all rotten, rotten and bad there at the theatre, kiddoo, and I don't want you to go—see? I want you to stay away."

"But you are there, dear?" she reminded him.

"I know, but——"

"And you'll protect me, won't you?" she finished gently, "if there be need of protection."

He threw out his chest and his funny little eyes flashed dangerously. "You're mine, my Nelly, I guess," he said significantly.

And so it was settled. Aunt Faith and half of Greenhill Centre saw them off. Williams carried a smart new suit-case which he had ordered from town, and their clothes had been packed in the huge Taylor which he had brought with him when he came in June. Aunt Faith kissed them both, for she had become greatly attached to her nephew-in-law; the fire department presented Nelly with a gorgeous bouquet; Greenhill Centre lustily cheered them, and then—the whistle sounded and they were gone.

"We—the show—opens in Brooklyn, with 'Philly to follow," Williams told his wife. "Ever been in Brooklyn? Only thing you can say for it is that it's just across the street from New York."

"I've never been anywhere," laughed Nelly. "I'm a rube, a hayseed. I only hope, dear, that you won't be ashamed of me."

"Ashamed of you—you!" gasped Williams.

"Yes, I'm so green, I'm afraid I won't know just what to say or do," she declared, with an appealing little glance. "You see, your friends must have traveled extensively—been every place, seen everything, while I——"

"Mutts—they are all—nobodies. Let 'em alone—have nothing to say or do with them, that's all," said her husband, with a wise look in his little blue eyes.

The company was rehearsing at a hall near Irving Place, and there Williams went the next morning, after leaving his wife at their boarding-house with a gaudy paper-back novel. Most of the members of the Twilight Stars Burlesquers were gathered at the far end of the hall busy with "parts" and "scores" when he entered. Instantly there was a wild hurrah, a tall, thin-faced young man at the piano began playing the Wedding March from "Lohengrin," several men laughed loudly, and a group of chorus women clapped their hands and shrieked congratulations in hoarse, thin, nasal or billingsgate voices as the case might be. A large blond woman in red and black waved her hand to him and sang in an uncertain "female baritone" voice:

"No wedding-bells for me, I'm as happy as
can be.
I may love you like a brother,
But I don't want to be a——"

She beckoned to him with her wonderful blond hand. "Come here, Pat! I heard you've gone and done it. Where is she?"

Williams came slowly toward her. "You're looking good," he said. "How've you been, Viola? Good morning, ladies." And he nodded at the group of chorus women gathered around the piano.

"You and Daily play the parks again this season?" he asked the woman, after a short silence.

"Heavens, yes! I ain't satisfied away from the show shop, you know, Pat," she replied. "We had a good time of it, too. Played from Albany to Chicago and back again. We went big. Ask Tim if he ever played The Farm, Toledo."

"Why?" questioned Williams.

"Oh, it's a joke, that's all," and she laughed loudly. "I was doing imitations of Peter Pan and Zaza, and some jay thought I was Lillian Russell and wanted to take me out to feed. Of

course I had to refuse. There was Tim. He's so funny about what I do, and yet since we have been married the best I got from him was a bottle of beer after the show. Gals, take my advice, if you can't cop a Pittsburg stogie leave the men alone."

"I knowed a puffctly lovely gent; I met him this Summer down at Bergen," volunteered a pretty, big-eyed girl, one of the "ponies" in the ballet. "He was a Harvard man, too—one of them kind what goes in a barber shop and spends a dollar, just has *everything* done—but his pa wouldn't dig down in his jeans, so I said nay. Ah, me, it's a sad world!"

"Yes, my dear, and it's we women what always pays, too," sighed the blond Viola, industriously applying a powder-puff to her nose. "Tim, Tim! You got my perless'nal copy of 'Love Me and the World is Mine'?"

The manager and proprietor of the company, a stout, bald man with Hebraic features, approached Williams. "Heard you were married, Pat," he said quietly. "Nothing to it, of course."

"Oh, but I am," quickly responded Williams.

"You don't mean it! Well, well! Where is she?" asked the manager, looking around.

"My wife's home—at our boarding-house."

"Why didn't you bring her over?"

"She's not a professional—don't understand all that sort of thing," said the little comedian, with a glance at Viola and the chorus people. "I kind of thought I wouldn't."

"Don't do anything?" questioned the manager.

"Nothing."

"Sing?"

"I—think so."

"Good-looker?"

"Yes." He couldn't say more before this man, couldn't explain to him, nor let him see his real self. And again, he hated him for his question.

"Well, good God, man, bring her over! She can fill in the chorus, if nothing else. We're short of girls,

too. Think she'll do for the ponies, Pat?"

"I'm not going to bring her over," said Williams quietly. "She's not that kind, Mr. Marcus; she's not like Viola Du Barry and—and them, and if I can help it she never will be. She couldn't do anything on the stage—she'd be scared to death, and the tobacco smoke would dry her voice right up, just like it did Viola's. She ain't coming here if I can help it."

For a second Marcus looked him squarely in the face and then something he saw there—a quiet look of determination—made him turn sharply on his heel. "It's twelve per I'm paying the ponies this season, Pat," he observed as he strode off.

The rehearsal dragged wearily to a close. The day was warm, and the hall, filled with dancing, perspiring women and scented with every unknown perfume in the world, nauseated Williams. It was all so different from Greenhill Centre and Nelly. He was glad when it was over and glad that Nelly wasn't there to see it.

Tim Daily and his wife, Viola Du Barry, leading woman of the company, stopped Williams as he was leaving the hall. Daily greeted Williams with a silent handshake. It was significant that the man had little to say off the stage, leaving the field open to the women.

"We're going to Mac's to have a bite," said Viola. "Won't you join us?"

"I can't; my wife expects me home to dinner," returned Williams, eager to get away.

"Already! Take it from me, Pat, if you let her begin that way, Gawd only knows how it will end. Of course, if you tell her you'll be home at a certain time, she's going to look for you, but don't begin it or there'll be trouble for sure!" Viola lifted her skirts as they crossed the street, smiling condescendingly at a quartette of newsboys on the corner who had recognized her.

"Gee, ain't she de queen!" gasped one urchin breathlessly.

"Nelly's all right," said Williams shortly.

They stopped at the side door of a saloon, and Viola, one foot on the lower step, turned to the little comedian. "Won't you join us, Pat—you sure?" she asked graciously.

"No."

"All right, then. Bring your wife over to see me, Pat. We're at Goebel's, you know, Fourteenth street. I can show her a lot of tricks or the trade—how to make up and so on. I know I'll like her and I hope we'll be great pals."

Williams opened his mouth to tell her that which she must know sooner or later, but instead all he said was, "Thank you, Viola."

"By the way, what part is she going to do?" asked the woman. "Even if she ain't had any experience, that don't hurt—she's pretty and that goes big. Marcus is looking out for a girl to play Irene Helena's part—Irene's married a drummer and has gone to Chicago. Strike him for that—I'll show Nelly how to do it."

Williams shook his head slowly. It was harder to do than he had thought it would be, especially when the woman meant it in all kindness of heart.

"And then I suppose you'll have her for a partner in your acrobatic turn in the olio," she went on, her head on one side, her foot beating a sharp tattoo. "It'll be real nice for you to work together like that, too. Oh, bring her over, Pat, and I'll help her frame up. Give her my dear love and tell her we're going to be great pals when we get out on the road. . . . Well, you won't come in? So long, Pat."

"So long," echoed Daily.

"So long," replied Williams.

All the way up to the boarding-house he went over in his mind what Viola had said to him. She but saw the natural conclusion of things, took it for granted that Nelly would join the company and live their life, since she had married him, one of them. But Williams, remembering certain things, cried no. Viola was not a bad sort, she was kind-hearted, generous, and a

good wife to Daily, but he didn't want Nelly to know her or her kind—to become one of them.

He pushed open the hall door and hurried up to their room on the third floor. On the threshold he stopped, understanding. Nelly had thrown herself across the foot of the bed and in her forlorn loneliness was sobbing bitterly.

"Nelly, baby!" he said gently.

The sobbing ceased, she raised her head and saw his blue eyes filled with tears. She came quickly toward him and, resting her head on his shoulder, clasped him tightly with her arms.

"Oh, dearest, dearest, you must never leave me alone again, never, never," she sobbed. "Take me with you—anywhere, to the theatre, only take me with you. I was so lonely, so frightened, and I waited and waited and you didn't come."

"But, Nelly—" he began.

"It's awful to be alone, dear," she cried. "I just can't stand it."

And so it came about that Nelly accompanied her husband to rehearsal next morning. Williams himself was very anxious about her personal appearance, and was satisfied only when she had decided on a plain white shirt-waist suit with a little white sailor hat to match. When she was ready Williams could scarcely restrain his delight. She was so girlish, so pretty, so different. With a smile he thought of Viola and her red-and-black costume and much-beribboned and befeathered hats of the chorus ladies. He was very proud of Nelly as he introduced her to Mr. Marcus, and he saw by the second glance which the manager bestowed upon her that he, too, saw the difference and appreciated it. Enough that he ordered one of the men to bring Mrs. Williams a chair and gave her a sheet of music to use as a fan, remarking that the weather was unusual even for the last of August.

After a little Viola came over and kissed Nelly with a resounding smack. Then one by one the other members of the company came up and were presented by Miss Du Barry, who had already taken up her position as instructor-in-chief to Nelly Williams.

And while at first Nelly was a little puzzled by the women's toilettes and conversations, she soon forgot this and talked with them in a low, shy voice which the girls pronounced too cute for anything. While not admitting it even to themselves, they saw that she was different from them and theirs and, like all women of their kind, they bravely put forth their best foot. Viola told her school-room jokes and the St. Aubyn sisters sang their baby song especially for her benefit, offering, at its conclusion, to teach her the chorus if she thought she'd like to learn it.

"If you only had an alto voice, Miss Williams, it would be real elegant," spoke the blond St. Aubyn sister. "But maybe you have—have you?"

"Why, I don't know," smiled Nelly. "I sing very little and I've had no training. What is your voice?"

"Phenomenal soprano," returned Miss St. Aubyn calmly. "From low G to C above and back."

"Let us hear you sing, Mrs. Williams," said Viola. "Here, Charlie, strike C for Mrs. Williams—can you make it, dearie?"

Nelly suffered herself to be led over to the piano where the pale, thin-faced young man sat waiting for his cue. He struck middle C and waited, and Nelly, none too sure, a little flushed, took the note, her nerves all a-quiver.

"That's it! Now go on, Charlie," commanded Viola, and she put her arm about the girl's waist.

Nelly, encouraged at their praise, and feeling a little surer of herself, sang the middle and upper scales in a sweet, bell-like soprano.

"Great!" cried Viola.

"Brava!" said a voice from the back.

Turning, Nelly saw Marcus himself. He was gazing at her in undisguised admiration, and when he saw her startled face he smiled and nodded pleasantly.

"Pretty good," he said, and went off to find Williams. To Williams he said: "I can't use your wife in the pony ballet; she'd make the others look like so many bars of soap, but it's thirty per,

Pat, in the after-piece and ollo. Think it over."

Williams did think it over, and every time the answer came to the same thing—no! When his exit was made he went down the hall and found Nelly at the piano with the musical director who was rehearsing the ponies for the chorus of one of Viola's songs. Nelly was singing with them; high and clear her voice rose above the others. She knew nothing about music, but the air was simple and she had quickly learned it. When Williams came up the director was saying something about the dance that followed the chorus of the song, and two of the girls were showing Nelly the different steps.

"I've got it now. It's this way," and Nelly began, keeping in step with the others.

"Gee, you learn quick," said one girl, and Nelly, pleased and encouraged, put in a few extra steps of her own that made the girls shout with approval and caused the director to turn around on the stool.

When Williams came after her Marcus joined him and pointed to his wife, who, flushed and happy, had seated herself in the chair, the pony chorus gathered about and fanning her with their sheets of music.

"Well?" he said.

"Mr. Marcus, I don't want Nelly doing that, I don't," returned Williams. "God, man, can't you see she's different?"

"Yes, she's different but—she married you, Pat," answered Marcus grimly.

A little later they walked up Irving Place together, Williams and Nelly and Viola Du Barry and Tim Daily.

"You men walk ahead—Nelly and me want to talk," said Viola, coming up and taking the girl's arm from Williams.

He silently obeyed and they continued on and out into Broadway. The two women chatted affably together, and the man's very soul turned sick as he caught himself wondering just what Viola was saying to her. Again, as they got further up-

town, he noticed that the men stopped and turned to look at Viola, her pronounced costume making her unpleasantly conspicuous. It got on his nerves—he didn't want his wife to be seen on the street with the woman.

At Twenty-third street he called to Nelly and they bade the Dailys good-bye. He said nothing going home, waiting until they had reached their own room before he spoke to her.

"Nelly," he said presently, "I'm not going to take you to the theatre with me any more—never again!"

"But, dear, Mr. Marcus said—" she began, her eyes filling.

"I know, I know, baby, but—those women, Viola, the St. Aubyn sisters, those ponies—Nelly, I don't want you to go, never again, sweetheart. Promise me you won't."

"But I thought—and everybody said—I did so nicely for a beginner. Mr. Marcus said . . . Dear, you don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do, Nelly."

"But why?"

"Because—oh, because I don't want you to get to be one of them—like they are, don't you see? Why, God A'mighty, I'd rather see you dead than like—one of them. They—they are——"

"What?" she demanded quickly.

"Common, just common," he said, his lips trembling with emotion.

"You mean—wicked, dear?"

"Yes, everything that's bad—wicked," he said.

"But not Viola and the nice little ponies, dear," she cried quickly. "Why, they were all just as nice and kind to me, and Viola said that we were to be great—great—friends, only she didn't call it friends. Surely they are not wicked, dearest?"

He opened his lips, there were hundreds of stories, any of which would cause Nelly to turn from her new-found friends as she would from some unclean thing, but wisely he held his peace.

"Is Viola wicked?" she asked gently.

He set his teeth and answered grimly, "Yes."

"How?"

Williams moved over to the bureau and began to settle his cravat. "She—drinks and—smokes," he answered, watching her in the mirror.

"Is that all?"

"Isn't that enough?" he questioned sharply. "If I ever thought that of you——"

"Oh, dear! You know that I—!" She glanced at him reproachfully, but he pretended not to see the glance and kept on at the bureau.

"And the others, the ponies?" she asked, after a short silence. "They're so little and cute——"

"All that Viola does and more," he told her, a little ashamed, for after all these were his own people. "They're bad, all bad, Nelly!"

"I can't believe it," she replied in almost a whisper.

No more was said about the matter then, and for the remainder of that week Williams attended the rehearsals alone. To Viola and the eager ponies he replied that Nelly was ill, but none of them did he encourage to come and see her.

Then one night there was a scene very like the one which followed Williams's first day at rehearsal. He found Nelly alone in a darkened room, crying. He was very tender with her.

"This can't go on," he said gently. "I can't go away every day—twice a day—and leave you by yourself, I see that. How would you like to go home for a while to Aunt Faith, Nelly?"

She stopped crying. "Don't you want me, dear?" she asked softly. "If you do not——"

He didn't answer. He always wanted her and she knew it, so what was the use of mere words? At last he spoke.

"I'll try this, Nelly," he said quietly. "You know I do an acrobatic turn in the olio, a comedy-trick stunt, and I always use a woman for the light end of it. I'll teach you how to do a few jumps and tumbles, Nelly, but no burlesque work—do you hear?—no singing in the finale or dancing with the ponies. Just in my turn, that's all, and for

God's sake keep away from everybody!"

The days that followed were brighter and gayer than any they had spent since leaving Greenhill. Williams taught Nelly the few jumps and was himself surprised at her ability to catch an idea.

"She learns it all too quick," he said, with a frown. "She's too quick—always."

They rehearsed for the last time late one Sunday night, leaving town early in the morning for Brooklyn, where they opened with a *matinée*.

Nelly was in high spirits. She ran with a programme to Williams, showing him down in the olio her name linked with his, thus:

Nella—Arcaro and Williams—Pat Comedy Acrobats

"It's just lovely, isn't it?" she cried. "I must save one to send to Aunt Faith."

Williams nodded silently. Later, in their dressing-room—for Williams had declared that they must dress together, it was either that or Nelly with some of the women of the company—he saw her for the first time in the short beruffled skirt that she was to wear in their "turn."

"God!" he cried involuntarily. It needed only the skirt to complete the picture. Her stage name selected by Marcus, the billing on the programme, nothing was as seeing his wife in the short red skirt, with bared arms and neck.

"How do I look, dear?" she asked anxiously. "Too much rouge? Viola said I must be careful, but I think—it looks—rather nice, don't you?"

Nelly kept in the dressing-room until their act was called and the orchestra began to play their music. Then she hurried up to the stage. Williams was there putting the great steel apparatus in position, tightening the cords, testing the swing, fixing and trying everything himself.

"Are you nervous, baby?" he asked her.

"Remember," he warned, "when I count three close your eyes and turn a backward drop—I'll catch you. When I count three—close your eyes and hold your breath."

She nodded, laughing, and the curtain rose. Marcus, out in front, thought he had not seen a more attractive figure in burlesque than Nelly, and the audience, quick to see and appreciate, applauded generously.

"She's made a ten-strike with 'em," whispered Viola, in the wings.

"Neat," answered Daily quietly.

The early part of the "turn" was spent in comedy work. Williams did his well-known funny falls and drops, and Nelly turned several handsprings, her scarlet skirts flaring out around her like a red chrysanthemum.

Then came the famous drop. With Williams's assistance Nelly climbed to the top of the great apparatus and stood smiling down at the sea of faces below her. Williams took his position, the orchestra made a weird, rumbling sound like the roll of many drums, and the counting began.

"One, two, three!"

There was a gay little laugh from the girl, a whirling of red skirts and then a dull, sickening thud. He had missed her. The pony ballet in the wings screamed and shrieked, then they were quiet, as they saw the still little figure and the widening pool of dark blood.

In the confusion that reigned Williams moved to one side of the stage and there Viola found him, very still and white.

"You moved, you moved!" she cried passionately, catching at his arms. "I saw you move after she had jumped. You did it a-purpose—you killed her!"

"Well?" he said in a strangely quiet voice.

"Well?" cried Viola aghast. "Pat, you didn't——?"

"Yes, I did," he nodded. He took her arm and pointed to the ponies, gorgeous and shameless in pink fleshings and cupid's wings. "I did it to save her from that," he said, with a strange smile.



AU SEUIL

Par Richard Hovey

LE destin nous a prit de sa main forte,
 Il nous a pris en plein soleil, soudain,
 Il nous a pris avec son haut dédain
 Et il nous a montré la sombre porte
 Où nous ne pouvons qu'entrer. Il nous porte
 Jusqu'au seuil!—Maintenant, (oh, lourde main!)
 Nous connaissons le secret du chemin
 Comme on connaît l'âme d'une amie morte.

Au delà de ce seuil quel noir aux dents,
 Quel inconnu terrible nous attends?
 Peut-être—l'âme de l'homme est si folle!—
 On rencontrera le sourire d'un dieu
 Qui nous bénira de ses grands yeux bleus
 Et nous rassurera de ses mains molles.

THE CONVERSION OF MARCIA

By Mary Arnold and Ludwig Lewisohn

WE knew that after a brief but bitter experience of the married state, Frank Selden and his wife had parted. We knew that Marcia, tall, slender, nervous and large-eyed, threw herself feverishly into the noise and clangor of a downtown street; that Frank, who was a dreamer, comforted his soul with the stars and trees beside the Hudson. All this was commonplace enough. What roused in us keen wonder was the fact that, though separation was said to be irrevocable, Frank visited his wife. He returned from these visits gray of skin and with trembling hands. "To break with misery," said a wit of our circle, "is the primal right of a man; to keep an agony in cold storage for occasional consumption is the act of a fool." But in his heart the wit knew that Frank was no fool, we all knew it, and continued to live under the fine stimulus of the problem, completely incapable of fixing the blame on either Frank or Marcia.

One stormy night in early Autumn Frank, after one of his periodic absences, strode into my room with nervous steps and hardly a salutation. His lips were dry to blackness, his eyes restless, his skin drawn tight over the symmetrical bones of his face. The whole man was weakened, demoralized, knocked out. I pointed to a cupboard; Frank understood, and gulped down glass after glass of raw spirits.

"Hold on," I said, "you're not used to it. You'd be first drunk, then sick, then repentant—all three unnecessary and absurd. If you want comfort—talk!"

Frank sat down in an easy-chair and

rubbed his right knee, then he rose and strode up and down the room. I kept silent, but his nervousness communicated itself to me and I was quiveringly alert for his revelation. Then he spoke, as rapidly, yet casting about for words to give body to things impalpable. His voice betrayed the same eagerness to communicate to me what had befallen him with the same hopelessness of succeeding. For a moment, too, this despair of finding expression dominated his consciousness. "It's easy to say 'talk,'" he began. "I'd like to talk about it, but—it can't be told. It simply—can't! It seems—to me"—he grew more coherent and a dreamy look came into his eyes—"it seems to me that a great deal of misery could be eliminated if our powers of expression were more perfected, more under our command—if we could communicate our soul-states (vile word!) with scientific accuracy and verbal neatness."

Then he plunged into narrative.

"You didn't know Marcia three years ago. She was a girl in a million, strong, gracious, intense, with fine tastes and finer sympathies—an intelligent man's woman. The great weariness that overtook me in the presence of your average woman's woman left me in her presence. Upon her, it seemed, one could lean one's spirit. There was a clarity in her eye, a decision about her utterance, a firmness in her touch, that cooled and healed and consoled. Those were bad days for me. I was cut up over a number of things. No matter what—now. Here, then, were light and refuge—if she would have me . . . She yielded with a readiness, almost

an eagerness, that surprised me. A strange, moist film veiled her calm gray eyes; a sob which seemed to astonish her, too, leapt from her throat, and she clung to me with an ardor that I had not dared to hope for . . . We were betrothed.

"The days that followed were the best. Life yields such days once only. They were hardly days of demonstrative passion. That's not my way. But the wind sang in the trees and the stars were our very own. My poor trade of writing changed into something better. My sentences rolled with cleaner sweep and a rhythm more sonorous. Words came—words with wings. All I did was done for her, through her—was carried to her."

I felt some subtle disappointment as Frank paused a moment and lit a cigarette. So far his story seemed no uncommon one; to the observer indeed there seemed a hint of overdone sentiment in it. A young woman with gray eyes, Egeria to an eager young journalist. Pahl! And yet the man's manner was pregnant with genuinely tragic hints. He sat down and half-viciously blew clouds of smoke. Then he started again, but more slowly.

"As time went on it seemed to me that a subtle irritation trembled now and then under Marcia's calm of manner. She was often silent, restless, and looked at me with an appeal in her eyes which touched me strangely. Rigid self-examination revealed, or seemed to reveal, no fault in my conduct, no flaw in my love or its observances. And so this vague trouble seemed to pass.

"But a day came on which the phantom was no longer a phantom. In the midst of talk widely remote from personalities, the tears came into Marcia's eyes and it seemed to me that I heard in her voice something that resembled the wail of a child. She clung to me strangely and said over and over again: 'You *do* love me—don't you?' I went out into the night gladly, out into the bracing wind. Her pathetic eyes haunted me and the unaccustomed droop of her form."

A certain hardness—or was it only my fancy?—seemed to insinuate itself into the tone of Frank's voice. The muscles about his eyes and mouth contracted slightly so that over his face seemed to glide a look of cruelty.

"The scene repeated itself," Frank went on, "first occasionally, then daily. But its significance was lost on me. It seemed to me merely the natural eagerness and anxiety of a young girl whose marriage was fast approaching, to be certain, beyond all human doubt, that the conditions of that marriage corresponded to her ideal. So I yielded to her mood and to her subtly gradual elimination from our intercourse of all impersonal elements. That's a flat way of putting it. She dissected my feelings for her, nerve by nerve, with a breathless avidity, with tireless persistence. And when I had exhausted confession, argument, even rhetoric, at moments when the pitch of my passionate emotion fell below hers, she sank back invariably with that child-like wail in her voice and that look of dumb pathos in her eyes. 'No, you don't, you *don't* love me!' I did not expect—how could I?—that before my very eyes the primeval woman, hungry with elemental needs, would throw off the veneer of civilization and bitterly though unconsciously resent the fact that in me the artificial interests of life had grown to be as deeply rooted as hunger, thirst, and love . . . Oh, yes, I put it well, and yet inadequately. God knows I've had years to comprehend and formulate. I hoped that after marriage all would be well, that we would regain our poise, and that the unspeakable gladness that had seemed to me the final test of perfect love would return.

"I can't talk much about the first weeks of our married life. I loved Marcia, and well . . . I don't think that I was constantly happy, but the old questionings seemed to have died—for a little while. Life, however, is insistent—and varied. Love, when it means close and perfect human companionship, is of life's essence;

when it means rapture and passion it goes gradually to the wall. That's neither poetry nor fiction, I know, but brutal fact. I took up my work again, foregathered with you and the rest of the old crowd, brought home my thoughts, my interests, and met the wail of a stricken child in the voice of a woman, tearful reproaches and passionate forgiveness, 'You don't love me. You don't!'

"An evening came on which I was utterly weary.

"My dear child,' I said, 'try, if you can, to behave like a rational being.'

"The storm burst at length. But her passion, in which there was, at least, some dignity, broke down into the wail that had now become habitual. There seemed to be some truth in the reproach she made that I was always tired at home. I did my best. But day after day every nerve was laid bare. A touch, a look, stung me, and the wail in Marcia's voice and the pathos of her eyes filled me gradually with a certain uncontrollable contempt for her as a woman. Remorse for this feeling rescued my tenderness and yet, day by day, there crept into my very soul an unknown feeling of cold and ruthless brutality which surged into my throat when Marcia's eyes fell or her voice rose to that plaintive note.

"I cannot describe to you the torture of those days. One of us was mad, it seemed: she or I? Sometimes, it is true, hours of peace would come. Marcia would control herself in a measure, would cease to speak of her heartache and seem to find again her old dear self. But such intervals were brief and became less frequent.

Frank's voice echoed the hopelessness of perished days. I felt the inadequacy of any possible comment. Still I said:

"Could you not have brought some other influence to bear upon her; her mother's, for instance?"

"That was the maddening part of it. Of what could I accuse her? You know her now. Is she not outwardly quite sane, intelligent, sympathetic?"

"True."

"Well, so she was then, to all but me. To *me* she was only Woman stripped of all accessories: I was to her merely Man. In her heart raged the desire for possession so long dormant."

"And you tried to reason with her?"

"Oh, yes, and she would confess that she was unconscionably irritating, but at the end, after a little, she would burst out in her old wail: 'But I'm never sure that you love me! Never! Never!'"

Frank sprang up.

"You remember the blizzard year before last. Well, I don't know whether you ever noticed it, but when one is nervous and irritable, foul weather rasps and grates. I struggled along on my way home. The wind stung my face with bitter keenness, drove the sword-like snow into my eyes and turned my umbrella inside out with impish malice. I reached home weary, breathless, thirsting for peace and silence.

"Marcia sat in my study looking wan and troubled. Her pallor accentuated certain lines that had begun to appear in her face, and the new revelation came to me that her physical comeliness was failing. A momentary feeling of pity was followed by swift resentment. It was her own fault. She was wearing herself out, punishing me, for what? For the baseless doubts of a disordered imagination. The boundless banality of it all drove the blood of anger to my head.

"Marcia looked at me from under drooping lids. She must have divined something of what was passing in me. She came across the room and sat close to me.

"Frank, why do you look at me—so? Don't you love me a little? Aren't you glad to be with me?"

"I kissed her—perfunctorily it may be. I felt no emotion, only deep fatigue.

"I am tired, Marcia,' I said, sinking back into an easy-chair with an exclamation of relief, 'very tired!'"

"Yes?" Her voice was small and cool. 'Well, then, I'll leave you alone.'

"I took up a book and tried to read. But I knew that furtively her eyes were

watching me, and I knew that the momentary aloofness that had almost refreshed me was merging swiftly into the old obsession of doubt and despair. . . . Soon she came back and laid her hands on my book.

"Frank, Frank! Do you hear me? I can't *stand it*. I can't! You *used* to love me!"

"Madness seized me, sheer madness. I flung her from me; she fell forward and struck the table's edge. A crimson welt flecked her soft skin . . . My God, think of it!"

"I ran from the house with her moaning in my ears, ran somewhere, anywhere. But in the storm the vision of the blood on her face pursued me . . ."

Frank and I were both silent for a while. Here was indeed a tragedy that forbade speech. It was almost incommunicable, and completely beyond alleviation. At last Frank spoke again.

"You see if she had forgiven me there would have been no hope. But that blow awakened the real Marcia. She refused to return to me. Her eyes shrank from mine. 'There's but one hope for us,' she said; 'It lies in our strength to keep apart.'"

"And why did you go back?"

"Because she can't live without me. No, it isn't masculine vanity that makes me think so. I'm far beyond that. 'And . . . I love her . . .'"

I was silent, powerless to offer him any consolation. To relieve the tension I got up and put away the flask and glass from which he had drunk. When I looked at him again he sat with closed eyes, oblivious of my presence. I moved my chair, he looked up, and we drifted into idle talk on impersonal matters. But when he had gone I could not dismiss his problem from my mind. The irony of that self-destroying love gripped my mind and mastered all my emotions.

It was obvious that there had been a tacit agreement between Frank and Marcia to avoid meeting at the same social functions. Hence it was not without sharp surprise that I perceived

them both to be present at Rankin's musicale. It was hinted later that Rankin had arranged the meeting at Frank's request. She had been out of town for some time. But that's not to the point. Marcia's bearing under such difficult conditions was faultless, and Frank's eyes followed her.

I lost sight of them for a time and, absorbed in reflection, thought to escape for a minute unobserved. I passed behind the screen placed at an angle before an open window which gave upon a balcony, then paused abruptly and sat down softly on a chair; for there on the balcony I saw dimly the outlines of two figures—man and woman. His voice, subdued to a pleading tone, the poise of her head faintly discerned, told me who they were.

" . . . Marcia, you may trust me wholly now. I shall never . . . forget myself again."

Her voice was choked.

"You want me to be honest with you, Frank, don't you? And . . . I will be. I *do* trust you, entirely. But I can't trust myself . . . ever. I shall never be certain of you—never!"

He drew her head to his shoulder.

"Frank," she spoke with gentle impetuosity, "do you ask me to come back to you because you love me or only because you . . . pity me?"

"I love you, Marcia."

A faint note of fear and surprise died from his voice ere the sentence was finished.

"But you pity me?" she asked.

"That too, dear. That, too!"

Then his self-command gave way.

"Marcia," he cried desperately, "are both of our lives to be ruined by your morbid fancy? Can nothing give you any help?"

His words were lost on her.

"So you do pity me! Frank," she persisted, and her voice shook with passion, "before God, can you swear that you love me *more* than you pity me?"

He caught her thin wrists and held them in a vise-like grip.

"You'll drive me mad, Marcia!"

"Pity! Pity!" she cried in a fury of

resentment, "keep your pity; I want only your love!"

His voice sank in the monotony of despair.

"It is impossible, Marcia, impossible! There are conditions that no man could endure—and no woman. It is you—you, who must take pity on us both."

She shook off his touch and fled—a lithe, strange-eyed, haunting figure.

More than ten months later—I had been in a freer air and the subtler complexities of life seemed far away—I received the blandest of conceivable notes from Marcia. Would I dine with them—them!—on such a date? The date was, fortunately, quite early; for recalling so minutely all I had been cognizant of, I was harassed with a constant speculativeness. They were together, so much was clear: the puzzling element was a note unmistakable in Marcia's written words of a deep satisfaction, peace and, I had almost said, masterfulness!

I was early on the appointed evening. Their apartment seemed to breathe an atmosphere of beautiful repose; it seemed indefinitely removed from the clamor of life or the battles of the soul. Marcia met me; she had grown fuller of figure; her step and touch had no longer the old hovering quality, but were firm and competent, suggesting vaguely a person admirably conscious of some great responsibility. The lids of her large eyes drooped a little in the fulness of spiritual quietude.

She took me into their charming study—an "arrangement" of warm olive and the faint gold on the backs of many volumes—and led me to Frank,

who sat, smiling serenely, in an arm-chair. He rose to greet me with a rich cordiality, welcoming me to his home with a touch of the happily married man's condescension to the migratory bachelor. He wore darkly smoked glasses, but beyond that seemed in excellent condition, healthy, prosperous, almost—sleek. Marcia left us with a pretty, housewifely gesture. There were things to attend to: she always managed these little dinners herself.

Frank noted my comparative speechlessness and laughed.

"You know the beginning of our story: you deserve to know the end. In your wanderings you probably didn't hear that, almost without warning, months ago, my eyes failed me—badly. For a time I was quite blind. I have neither kith nor kin. In the terror of that great darkness I stretched out my hand and it met—my wife's . . . my wife's . . ."

His voice softened to a tenderness, a gratitude beyond words.

"She helped me, she cared for me, she gave me her sight, herself, her all; she lived for me and through me, as a mother for her child. I see now, though dimly; I shall never see quite well again. It doesn't matter—since I have Marcia, with all her old love and power."

"And there is no hint of the old doubt?" I asked boldly.

"None," he replied. "I depend on her absolutely and that dependence sustains her; I should be lost without her and the consciousness of that fact secures her perfect faith; she has found all her strength—through my weakness."



GETTING JEALOUS

FLYKYNS—I hear Tom and his wife have had trouble about her doctor.

SLYKYNS—Yes. You see, while he agrees that she needs medical attention, he objects to the kind of attention her doctor gives her.

April, 1908—10

THE BALLAD OF THE LOVER

By Theodosia Garrison

NOW who are you at heaven's gate
Who make no word nor prayer,
But boldly stand with lifted hand
As you would enter there?
What is the worth that lends you strength
The unsheathed word to dare?

Now by what right of service done,
Ere yet the life sands ran,
Speak then the deed that we may read
Or yet we bless or ban.
"I was a lover true," quoth he,
"When I was living man."

Nay, but your hands are empty hands
Wherein no hands were pressed,
No triumph lies within your eyes
Nor burns upon your breast;
No stain of granted kisses shows
About your mouth's unrest.

Now, an you lie not, show the sign
That you were lover true. . . .
No word spake he, but silently
His clinging mantle drew
And bared the wound wherewith his heart
Was broken through and through.



ADMIRATION

THOUGH we admire a man of push,
And point to him with pride,
He earns our maledictions when
He pushes us aside.

L. B. COLEY.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FLITTEST

By Channing Pollock

THOSE indefatigable persons who make a point of never missing a theatrical production had a merry time of it during the late Winter in New York. Most of the pieces put on for runs ran so fast that they were not visible at the end of a fortnight, and the I. P. soon found that he or she must rush to catch a play as one rushes to catch a train. Business has been bad on Broadway—with or without “apt alliteration’s artful aid”—and the survivors are those offerings whose managers were able to hop nimbly into town and then hop out again. Fourteen entertainments were added to the local list in the period of which I write, and only three of the number are likely to be on view when this magazine finds its way to your table.

A well-known manager told me in January that “The Witching Hour” was the single dramatic attraction in the city which continued to draw large audiences. The popularity of “The Merry Widow” was then, as it probably is now, unabated, and three or four other musical pieces were enjoying a fair degree of prosperity. Financial stringency, an epidemic of influenza, and other causes were made to account for the depression in amusements, but the real root of the difficulty undoubtedly has been the low average of merit in the season’s presentments. The Midwinter drama ranged from A to Z—from Armstrong to Zamacois—without providing anything that one would care to abbreviate his or her dinner for the privilege of witnessing.

Bearing out the promise that “the last shall be first,” Zamacois—Miguel Zamacois—headed the roll of honor

with his charming play in verse, “The Jesters.” Sarah Bernhardt pleased Paris with this work last Summer, and Maude Adams is sure to delight those among her audiences at the Empire who appreciate the graceful, the delicate and the poetic. There do not appear to be many such in New York, however, and it is regrettably likely that “The Jesters” will prove to have been written for posterity rather than for prosperity. In any event, we shall have profited by a literary interlude of exquisite fantasy in the midst of the gross materialism of modern life, and by the most consummate art and enchanting manner so far revealed by Miss Adams.

Dramatic criticism, which so often nowadays is merely dramatic witticism, was bewitched by this performance, and enthused as it has not done in many moons. True, one or two of the reviewers were disappointed that the play “revealed neither originality nor force,” and there was a deal of learned academic talk about flaws in the verse translated by John Raphael, but these minor notes were as nothing in the chorus of praise. “The Jesters” is so enchantingly poetic in essence that only a professional complainer could care whether its spirit was conveyed in hexameters or in taxameters. As to “originality” and “force,” who thinks less of the butterfly because it cannot draw a moving-van? Such carpings make one recall Robert Louis Stevenson’s remark at the death of Matthew Arnold, whose hypercritical eyes invariably saw the hole rather than the doughnut. “Poor Arnold!” sighed Stevenson, when apprised that

the end had come. "Poor Arnold! He won't like God!"

"The Jesters" does not pretend to the heights or depths reached by Hugo and Rostand; its story is a simple, shallow tale, admitting of no fine flights or great emotions, but rich in the beauties of humor, whimsey and romance. These are qualities, as I have had occasion to say before, none too readily or too generally appreciated in America. Both of the evenings which I spent at the Empire were spoiled by neighbors on whom the allurements and fascination of the performance were wholly lost. "They're speaking in rhymes," said one member of a party that sat in my rear on the opening night. "Sounds like a comic opera!"

The Baron de Mautpré, it appeared, was in dire poverty, and, fearful lest his friends should guess the truth, had shut himself up in his castle. Solange, his daughter, thus immured, had never seen a man of her own station, and confided in Oliver, the major-domo, that she waited anxiously for Prince Charming. ("Have you read 'Three Weeks'?" inquired the woman back of me. "Yes, and I think it's simply dreadful!") René de Chancenac and Robert de Belfonte about this time had argued between themselves as to which possession of a man is more likely to please the opposite sex—wit or beauty. They had made a wager, and chose the mysterious little lady prisoned in the castle to determine the winner. So, behold the gay fellows, disguised as peddlers, presenting themselves to the Baron. Oliver recognized them, and hit upon a plan by which they might remain in the palace. Solange was to feign melancholy, Oliver was to urge the appointment of jesters, and the conspirators were to return in that character.

The plan was carried out to the letter. René came with a hump sewed on his back, the better to make sure that wit alone was his attraction, and Robert laid siege with him to the heart of Solange. ("I saw Ethel Barrymore last night," continued the pest. "Isn't she too sweet? She's of a very old

theatrical family, you know. All her brothers are on the stage.") Ere long both youths were genuinely in love with the maiden. René was first to speak, addressing his sighs to her in the moonlight filtered through the windows of the castle. And Solange loved him, too, in spite of the ugly hump. The next day there was a trial among the fools to determine which should be selected by the daughter of the house. "The breeze" was selected as the topic for the test, and René told of the manner in which the gentle wind became enamoured of "a maiden of sixteen, blue-eyed, with golden hair."

"And, as he could not bring her flowers all
abloom,
The butterflies he'd waft in shoals into her
room,
From forest glades and fields, from near and
far, and they,
Blue, yellow, red and green, a quivering
bouquet,
He blew into her hair, bejeweled it, and then,
When he grew jealous, swiftly blew them out
again.
The scent of new-mown hay he brought in
from the fields,
From ev'ry bush and flower what each of
sweetest yields.
Marjoram, meadowsweet and sage he carried
there
For the maid of sixteen, blue-eyed, with
golden hair."

("There's Ernest Lawford!" quoth another in the theatre-party. "He was the pirate in 'Peter Pan.' They did say he was going to marry Miss Barrymore.")

"One day, alas, there came a lord from
Aquitaine
To woo and win the maid. He came and
came again,
And the unhappy breeze howled, in his mad
despair.
He gathered strength to rush back
with unwonted might,
Battered the castle's walls, howled, the un-
happy wight,
As though his storm-tossed soul could in the
noise find peace.
Or, with a whirl of rage, could his poor heart
release."

I think I shall never forget Miss Adams, as René, reciting that delicate imagining, that rhymed fairy-story. The breeze came back at last and found its inamorata crooning to her baby,

whereat it became gentle again and went away. René was chosen to fill the post of court jester, of course, and, we were led to believe, eventually married Solange. This, however, was not until he had torn the hump from his back, and given to the Baron a chest of treasure which he pretended to have found near the castle. I was sorry when the play was over, though the critic of "Three Weeks" rose with the remark that she didn't "care for that kind of thing," and that she hoped someone "had thought to telephone for a table."

If you happen to know any enthusiastic adjectives that have not been used for Miss Adams you may manufacture praise of her to suit yourself. I would submit, as being entirely applicable, the following list: Alluring, enchanting, fascinating, bewitching, enticing, subtle, winsome, convincing, delicious, impish, sprite-like, elfin, magnetic, lovely, ravishing and entrancing. As René, she is all these things, and a great many more. I am at a loss to form sentences that will give the least idea of her charm. It is as intangible as an Oriental perfume, as grateful as a Summer zephyr that scampers over the thistledown and dries the dew on one's forehead. Her voice throbs with the ecstasy of life, and her—

Dear me! I shall have sage old gentlemen, far removed from the spell of this little woman, smiling in their beards at my rhapsodies. Never mind; they shall go to see Maude Adams in "The Jesters"!

Consuelo Bailey looked very pretty as Solange, but she lacked the experience to do anything else. Repose is as yet an unknown quantity to Miss Bailey. Fred Tyler was properly cold and dignified as the Baron, whose servitor, Oliver, was mellowly impersonated by Edwin Holt. Gustav Von Seyfferitz made a better impression than any other member of the company, acting in the rôle of a mercenary master-at-arms, but his thick German accent conflicted with the statement that he came from Florence. E. W. Morrison, Frederic Eric and George

Henry Trader, as three unlucky jesters, were amusing, while William Lewers proved a satisfying Robert de Belfonte. Mathilde Cotrelly clowned fearfully in the part of a servant, called Nicole. The scenery was all that could be required.

Heaven knows we needed a play like "The Jesters" after "the putrid pessimism and flabby impressionism"—I quote from Adolph Klauber in the *Times*—of a month in which we had not only Ibsen, but two new men, Anthony P. Wharton and Owen Johnson, trying desperately to out-Ibsen Ibsen. It is a strong mind that would not cry for relief from such a trio of "entertainments" as "Rosmersholm," "Irene Wycherley" and "The Comet." In these three dramas the list of killed numbered seven, of whom six were suicides and one was murdered in cold blood. Cheerful relaxation for the amusement-seeker in search of respite from the cares of the day!

There was a time in my youth—the time at which I sympathized with Byron and wept at the thought of Keats—when great drama meant to me the concentrated combination of all that is grand, gloomy and peculiar. With better health of mind and body has come a better understanding; revolt against the doctrine of misery for misery's own sake; departure from the high-browed faith that there can be nothing beautiful in the world but wretchedness. The more I think of these notions the less I think of them. The truly great poet is he who shows us two lovely things where we had seen but one. The truly great dramatist is he who gilds the commonplaces of life and makes noble the most ordinary deeds of every day. What credit can attach to the constant digging up of abnormalities; the profitless probing into degeneracy and insanity; the endless exhibition of cases that are wholly individual, wholly curiosities? One finds in time the unoriginality of madness as an invariable motive; one learns that there is no easier fashion of ending play after play than by having its principals blow out their brains. Then

one begins to be an iconoclast. If only it might have been Ibsen, in propria persona, instead of John Rosmer, who felt, "Oh, what a joy it would be to me to bring a little light into all this gloom and ugliness!"

Mr. Wharton, who, like our own William Vaughn Moody, jumped from a professorship into fame with his first play, was the worst offender of the month, because he dealt with physical as well as mental deformity in "Irene Wycherley." The latter, at least, is partially hidden from the casual observer, while the former is unescapable. If you are possessed even of normal sensibilities, and you get into a car which contains a man whose face is hideously contorted, you promptly get out again. Why, then, should Mr. Wharton have expected to interest audiences, or make them tolerate, a hero whose visage is so scarred that its like is not often to be seen outside of the clinic-room? "Irene Wycherley" is a tragedy that would be most suitably performed in a college of physicians and surgeons.

The story of the piece is not without elements of brute strength. Irene—everybody on the stage calls her I-reen-y—has been separated four years from her husband, Philip Wycherley. In the course of much falsetto conversation at the beginning of the piece, we learn that Philip was "quite impossible," meaning that he had a penchant for everybody's wife but his own, and that he had once decorated the countenance of this lady with the aid of a riding-whip. Irene has left his bed and board in consequence, and has a little platonic affair of her own, when word comes that Philip has been desperately wounded during the course of a hunting expedition. "My dooty," says Irene, and goes back to him.

In the next act she is still in his house, putting up with brutality that the average person would not stand from a street car conductor, and this although six weeks have elapsed and dear old Phil is able to be about. We are treated to a sight of him soon after, but all description of his appearance will be spared you in these pages. I

have seen sidewalk beggars in Constantinople and veterans of machete fights in San Salvador, but never have my eyes been affronted by a more terrible spectacle than that of Edwin Arden as Philip Wycherley, attempting to awaken a responsive animal passion in Irene. When this attempt fails, Philip sends for Lily Summers, who has been his mistress while living with two successive husbands, and we learn that Charles Summers, who accompanies her and is the present incumbent, was really the "accident" that blinded Wycherley. Now Charles's suspicion is confirmed, and he finishes the job and himself. Irene is free to marry the platonic friend, and Lily to make more friends not so platonic.

'Tis a pretty thing, as Eddie Foy says, and may attract that incomprehensible class of people who go to murder trials, morgues, executions, and the chamber of horrors at the Eden Musée. Considering that it is his first play, Mr. Wharton has constructed "Irene Wycherley" rather neatly, though he has used a great many unnecessary characters, which bob up unexpectedly at odd moments and are seen no more. There are thirteen persons in the tragedy, of whom three disappear after the first act, four others are introduced originally in the second act, and two do not come on the stage until the last act.

It is hard to understand how Viola Allen, who is supposed to have quit the Empire Theatre Stock Company rather than act in "The Conquerors," has reconciled herself to the rôle of Irene Wycherley. It is equally hard to reconcile oneself to her in the part, which is being played in London by Lena Ashwell. Miss Allen indulges in a good deal of medieval mouthing, reveals every effort for effect, and is quite as unnatural as it is possible to be. The rest of the cast deserves praise. Edwin Arden is vividly realistic as Philip Wycherley, and Grant Stewart, who is preëminently a farceur and who recently contributed a notable comedy characterization to "In the Bishop's Carriage," is impressive as his father,

Sir Peter. Selene Johnson is excellent once more in the rôle of a naughty lady—for which rôles she is particularly fitted by reason of a fine pair of shoulders—and capital work is done by Walter Hampden, John Glendinning, Ffolliot Paget, Nellie Thorne, Dorothy Hammond, Mrs. Sam Sothern, May Whitty, and Lillian Shirley. The production was placed on view at the Astor Theatre.

The offense of "The Comet," acted by Madame Nazimova at the Bijou, was mitigated by the unintentional humor of the play. It recalled the famous witticism of Max Beerbohm, who, when he was called upon to join in a chorus of praise anent a certain star's portrayal of Hamlet, remarked that it was funny without being vulgar.

"The Comet" was a callow work, high-sounding and empty, in which the predominant note was schoolboyishness; a quality manifested in copy-book dialogue and in a representation of life as it seemed when we wore long hair, smoked pipes in the street, and aspired to write treatises on "The Strategic Genius of Napoleon Bonaparte" for the college weekly. Mr. Johnson's principal character was just such an individual as we used to conjure up when we read of an "adventuress," fascinating and beautiful, pursuing her wicked way over blasted hopes and ambitions, and leaving in her wake a trail of self-slain Gibson-men in dinner-coats. We had not then discovered that the really, truly "adventuress" is generally a servant girl gone wrong. Lona, the woman in Mr. Johnson's case, was neither of the heavens above nor of the earth beneath, but of the book-shelves in the library. She owed her fall to the fact that no girl can earn her bread without giving her body—that men are waiting like wolves to devour innocent maidens in search of jobs. We used to believe that, too, when we were at school, didn't we? Also, we believed that when one grew to be of age one was a real man, entitled to and sure of respectful attention from the most worldly. In those fledgling days of our youth we should have

thought it only reasonable that a twenty-one-year-old country lad could cause an "adventuress" to confess the story of her life, buttressed up with such highly original and philosophic utterances as: "The individual cannot stand against society." We are older now, and could only wish that this lad were our son, so that we might spank him and send him supperless to bed.

On with the plot; let joy reign unconfined! It was rather a good plot, combining the essentials of "Magda" and of a play of two seasons ago, called "The Strength of the Weak." Mr. Johnson successfully side-stepped the drama in the narrative, occupying himself with platitudes until the very end, when we had something closely approaching genuine suspense. Fernand, the lad in question, was the son of Dr. Leopold Ravanel, whose house also sheltered Cecelia, sister of Lona, *The Comet*. Lona had gone into the cold world years and years before, and her room had been locked ever since. Why? Be patient, and doubtless we shall learn before the play is over. Anyway, Lona returned with what sounded like a regiment of Rough Riders, but turned out to be "a coach and six." It was evident that poor Lona had led a depraved life, because she had a terrifying pallor, a Bernhardt collar, and a walk that made one hum, "Oh, why do they call me an Ibsen girl?" Fernand guessed the truth at once, and ordered everyone else from the room while he read the lady a lecture. Naturally, she defended herself. She said: "I do not sleep at night."

"Not at night?" inquired Fernand.

It sounded like that delicious Weber and Fields dialogue about, "I am going away from here."

"From here?"

"Yes, I am going away from here."

Nobody suggested trial, and Lona went on to explain how she became a bad woman. She explained it for two acts. As far as I could make out, her viciousness began with a brother of her grandfather, an old gentleman who "had lost everything but the

lusts of the eye." Lona told us the tale—it was a dainty little story, infinitely more hectic and exotic than anything in Elinor Glyn's much-advertised mistresspiece. Then there was more talk from Fernand, and still more talk from Lona, and finally Dr. Ravanel came home and caught them at it. Here, gentle reader, is where your patience is rewarded. At the eleventh hour—it was exactly 10.55—we learned that Dr. Ravanel was the seducer of Lona. He begged her to let his boy alone, and she refused. Then he told the boy that there was an insurmountable barrier between him and Lona—"the law that is respected even by the beasts of the field; that father and son may not share the same woman." Fernand, who had been acquainted with Lona just ten hours, went out and killed himself.

This "big speech" of the drama, which has been widely quoted, is a fair example of the casuistry of the whole play. What have "beasts of the field" to do with "the same woman"? And, even if we change the word "woman" to "creature," does the phrase admit of close inspection? Inbreeding is the first principle of raising fine stock. Caliph, recently deceased, dwelt in amity at the zoo with a female rhinoceros that was at once his third sister and his second wife.

There was no semblance of reality or truth in "The Comet." The programme announced that the action occurred "in the Spanish Pyrenees. Scenery by H. R. Law." (Do you know the story of the theatrical manager, taking a production West, who was awakened while the train was passing through the Garden of the Gods? "What's the matter?" asked the sleepy impresario. "I thought you might like to look at the scenery," said the porter. "Damn the scenery!" replied the manager. "I've looked at it every six hours since we left New York, and it's insured anyway!") The characters were certainly not Spanish. Indeed, they were not characters. They all talked exactly alike. Even the servant dropped into maxims now

and again. "The Comet" was a nebulous body, visible only to exceedingly morbid astronomers, and to them but for the space of a few weeks.

Madame Nazimova paraded the Nazimova mannerisms that have been so widely mistaken for symptoms of greatness, and was the glaringly unreal feature of the performance. The most artistic portion of her portrayal was the consumption of a small supper. At least, she eats like a human being. Brandon Tynan was sufficiently youthful and enthusiastic as Sentimental Tommy Fernand Ravanel. Dodson Mitchell, who divides his time between Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw and John J. McNally, was effective as the doctor who made such a sad mistake about the laws of natural history. The other people were unimportant.

"Rosmersholm," the last of the three dismal dramas mentioned, at least had the advantage of being by the master and not by the mimic. It is better than one or two other Ibsen plays produced earlier this season, in that it is easily understood—or, at any rate, that the story may be followed easily. The psychology of the characters, the motives and emotions which bring about that story, are bogged in a mental morass of darkness and despondency.

Mrs. Fiske presented "Rosmersholm" at the Lyric. Her management advertised: "The curtain will rise positively at 8." It did—very positively. In order to meet the spirit of gloom half-way, Mrs. Fiske had dispensed with an orchestra, and, no chime of bells or other substitute having been provided, the initial disclosure of the sitting-room at Rosmersholm was in the nature of a shock. Rebecca West, who was "discovered," called attention to a foot-bridge from which someone recently had leaped to death, and even those of us who hadn't read the play knew immediately that, in the end, its principal persons would jump from that bridge. The "someone" who had leaped was Beata, sister of Rector Kroll and wife of John Rosmer, over whose house Rebecca had presided during the madness of its mistress and

since her suicide. Toward the conclusion of the drama we learned that Rebecca, in love with John, had goaded his poor, crazed wife to self-destruction, but this story, which, despite its somberness and morbidness, has the elements of powerful drama, was not made manifest until the last part of the third act. For two long hours the play consists of long dissertations on Norwegian politics and obscure allusions to a tragedy with the essential facts of which we are not yet familiar. Finally the story comes, and afterward what promises to be a pleasant conclusion. John loves Rebecca, Rebecca loves John; their lips meet in a lovers' kiss. "Everything is all right!" you exclaim. But you do not know Ibsen.

"Do you love me?" inquires John. "Yes," answers Rebecca. "Then let us destroy ourselves." So they do, springing from that cursed foot-bridge into the mill-race, and thus committing mill race-suicide. It was a terribly narrow escape from a "happy ending," but, when it comes to escapes from happiness, you may put your trust in Old Doctor Ibsen.

Mrs. Fiske's portrayal of Rebecca West brought into evidence all the art and intelligence which have given this little woman the distinction of being the finest actress in America. How anybody can call Madame Nazimova great after seeing Mrs. Fiske is a puzzle more mystifying than was ever invented by Sam Lloyd. Albert Bruning was the best member of the supporting company, limning the editor, Peter Mortensgard, firmly in a scene only ten minutes long. George Arliss, now in his fourth season with Mrs. Fiske, gave a finished study of that beloved vagabond, Ulric Brendel. The Rector Kroll of Fuller Mellish, though in need of planing, was a strongly cut impersonation. Bruce McRae was John Rosmer. The settings had been carefully considered, and looked genuine.

A good many years ago Charles Dickson, vexed at my oburgation of a work from his pen and that of Grant Stewart, wrote to assure me that no

one should condemn a comic play on account of unoriginality, "since there are only three ideas in all the realm of farce." Mr. Dickson is acting at the Savoy just now in a piece built by Hennequin and Veber upon one of those three ideas, and reconstructed by Paul Potter. The piece is entitled "Twenty Days in the Shade," and it is not among those adaptations "the Potter spoiled in making."

In point of fact, "Twenty Days in the Shade" is one of the most entertaining bits of nonsense seen recently in New York. It has not the broad touches of real human nature that characterized "Mr. Hopkinson," but its authors have atoned partially by displaying a truly remarkable ingenuity, a well-nigh inexhaustible power of invention. Just when one has concluded that the story, which is very like that of Willie Collier's old vehicle, "The Man from Mexico," has been milked dry, the authors give a new twist to the udder of their wit, and bring forth an unsuspected stream—or scream. The complications frequently test one's credulity to the uttermost, but, if you go to the Savoy in the mood for pure farce, you will find yourself getting a hundred laughs for a dollar.

It would be a frightful task to give a detailed account of "Twenty Days in the Shade." The Comte De Merville loves his wife, Colette. He also loves a lady named Valentine. This scheme of parting the affections in the middle is found frequently in farces from the French. In the original version, called "Vingt Jours à l'Ombre," the Count loved Valentine a great deal more than Mr. Potter was willing to allow him to do. Mr. Potter sent him with Valentine to the theatre, where he thrashed a policeman. For this he was sentenced to prison. To have served his term would have been to acquaint Colette with the truth, so he hired a poverty-stricken acquaintance to take his place. This the acquaintance, Pantruche, did, making friends, under De Merville's name, with a jailbird known as "Shorty," who

promptly turned up to claim palship with the real De Merville. When I have added that the Count's mother-in-law was engaged to be married to the magistrate who sentenced her daughter's husband, I have explained the basis upon which the complications of this extremely Gallic muddle are founded. More than that there is not room to do in an ordinary-sized magazine.

"Twenty Days in the Shade"—"the shade" being Parisian slang for jail—is corkingly acted. Dallas Welford plays "Shorty" with excruciatingly comic seriousness, disposing once for all of the notion that his hit in the title rôle of "Mr. Hopkinson" was a mere accident. Charles Dickson is delightful as Pantruche, whose impecunious urbanity is almost Dickensonian. Richard Bennett gives a good performance of the husband, De Merville, and Pauline Frederick, who was fresh from the chorus a few years ago, when she essayed the name part with the second company presenting "The Little Gray Lady," is all that could be required as Colette. Jeffreys Lewis is an unctuous mother-in-law, and there are no flaws in the remainder of the organization, which includes Frank Burbeck, Ernest Lawford, Edwin Nicander, Hallen Mostyn, Grace Heyer and Vira Stowe.

Clyde Fitch is so deft, so adept, so witty, so photographically accurate in his depiction of certain characters and phases of life that he is certain to be entertaining, even when his work falls below the standard in one particular or another. "Her Sister," revealed by Ethel Barrymore at the Hudson, would be a capital play but for its plot. Mr. Fitch and Cosmo Gordon Lennox, whose two previous achievements were his being wedded to Marie Tempest and his authorship of "The Marriage of Kitty," have been false to themselves in picking out a story that proves exceptionally improbable, theatrical, and melodramatic. Excepting at the end of its second act, when the impossible is stretched to its uttermost limit, "Her Sister" is

never dull nor tiresome, as a piece with such a story must have been inevitably in the hands of any other dramatist.

Briefly told, the narrative concerns Eleanor Anderson, who has a fortune-telling establishment in Bond street. Miss Anderson's half-sister, Jane Hammond, has been indiscreet in America, and is much wanted to testify in a divorce action in which she has been named as co-respondent. Eleanor is beloved by Ernest Bickley, son of a family of wealthy tradespeople, and it happens that Jane is about to marry Ernest's godfather, George Saunders. The story of Jane's indiscretion is published with a picture which, by some mistake, is that of Eleanor. Ernest's uncle, Arnold Cullingworth, cross-examines Eleanor, everyone supposing her to be the person implicated, and, just as she has established her innocence, Saunders volunteers to send to New York for other photographs, when the quixotic girl takes the blame on herself in order to shield her sister. Thereupon Ernest drops her like a hot cake, and, after Cullingworth has brought out the truth and Saunders has promised to marry Jane anyway, Eleanor drops into the arms of the waiting uncle.

The best feature of the play, excepting only a wonderful picture of a catty woman, is its dialogue, the essence of Fitchian wit, and, I am tempted to add, though I don't know what it means, witchian fit. "Is she easy?" the fortune-teller asks of a client. "Perfectly," replies her secretary. "Let her go on and she'll tell you everything she wants to know." "What a name!" exclaims Mrs. Bickley of Eleanor, who is professionally known as Isis. "I shall want to ask her if it's lemon or vanilla." Jane describes the suspicious nature of Saunders by saying: "He's a really good, religious man, and he doesn't believe in anyone." "When our mother left my father to run off with your father she did you a great injustice," observes Eleanor of Jane, who, when she suggests going back to appear at the trial, is reminded that "your hat and your hair, with one

lying witness, would convict you." "Pity is God's common sense," declares Arnold, and to Ernest, who explains his indecision regarding the accusation against his sweetheart by observing, "I'm between two stools," he remarks drily: "Don't you mean between two bundles of hay?"

Ethel Barrymore, who is a much better actress than her best friends credit her with being, shows real art in her impersonation of Eleanor. The criticism of "Her Sister" must have left Miss Barrymore somewhat puzzled as to what sort of a vehicle she should choose. When she staged that splendid tragedy, "The Silver Box," she was blamed for picking out too heavy a play, and now she is condemned for selecting too light a one. The ghost of Clara Bloodgood—her name on the programme was Lucile Watson—portrayed the catty lady precisely as Mrs. Bloodgood would have done, and almost as cleverly as she could have done. That talented actor, Arthur Byron, is simple and sincere in the rôle of Cullingworth, while Desmond Kelley's Jane strikes one as being rather a success of personality than of impersonation. Louise Drew is still a trifle amateurish—she is seen as the secretary—and adequate performances are given by Charles Hammond as Ernest, Lumsden Hare as Saunders, and Fanny Addison Pitt as Mrs. Bickley.

Dramatists "run true to form" even less commonly than horses, but it is difficult to accept "Under the Greenwood Tree," which Maxine Elliott presented at the Garrick, as being from the pen of the man who wrote "Grier-son's Way" and "When We Were Twenty-one." H. V. Esmond's latest production is more like his earlier and poorest play, "One Summer's Day," than it is like the clear-cut comedies that served Henry Miller and Nat C. Goodwin. It would be difficult to imagine a more utterly supine work than "Under the Greenwood Tree," which the Lady Who Goes to the Theatre With Me, recognizing its total lack of originality, remarked would have been better named if the green-

wood had been supplanted in the title by a spreading chestnut.

A certain millionairess, Mary Hamilton, wanted to "get away from it all," and so determined upon taking a gipsy van "in the heart of the new forest" and pretending to be a bohemian. (Where have I met that plot before?) Sir Kenneth Friarly came trotting after, but J. G. M. Hylton, J. P.—meaning justice of the peace—bobbed up and got a strangle-hold upon her affections. Though this gipsy wore a tailor-made gown, cut wonderfully over the hips, and spoke far better English than he did, the foolish J. P.—or J without the P—never suspected that Mary might be anything but a vagrant. (Where *have* I met that plot before? Isn't it the least bit like "The Little Minister"?) Sir Kenneth was much troubled, and Mary's secretary, Peggy, advised him to woo her in order to arouse the jealousy of Mary. (Novel idea, this!) The real gipsies tied Mary to a tree, and the J. coming to the rescue, was knocked more nearly senseless than he had been in the beginning. Then Mary brought him back to consciousness, and, not having been struck with the suspicion that Mr. Hylton might be only another fortune-hunter, sly enough to feign ignorance of her identity, she concluded that she was loved for herself alone.

Two or three reviewers found "infinite charm" in this nonsense, just as they found "real poetry" in "The Toy-maker of Nuremberg." It is not given to everyone to discriminate between the simple good and the simply bad, nor between the cleverly fanciful and fancied cleverness, and so Mr. Esmond's work and Mr. Strong's were vagrantly praised because of their class, without regard to their rank in that class. I hope I shall always be among the first to see the beauty of a fanciful play which, like "The Jesters," is also poetic and ingenious and passing witty, but invertebracy, obviousness, and dinner-table dialogue do not appeal to me in one kind of play more than in another.

Miss Elliott acted Mary with quite

new appreciation of her own loveliness. Hers was an every-move-a-picture performance. There is no denying that she *did* look lovely, especially in a much-press-agented bathing-suit, which was discreetly covered by a trailing robe. Eric Maturin, as Sir Kenneth, and Mary Jerrold, as Peggy, disclosed such positive comic genius as almost made the entertainment worth while. The remainder of the cast did not call for extended comment. The most trenchant remark that can be made of "Under the Greenwood Tree" is that Mr. Esmond's plot was too thin and Miss Elliott's trailing robe too thick.

Paul Armstrong, author of "Salomy Jane" and of much comment regarding the incompetence of theatrical managers, took Daly's late in January for his own production of his own latest play, "Society and the Bulldog." Mr. Armstrong's ambition, which was the laudable one of showing young dramatists the way to secure intelligent presentation of their work, was temporarily defeated by the utter worthlessness of his material. "Society and the Bulldog" proved to be a wholly preposterous mixture, which reflected nothing even remotely resembling life, and suggested a musical comedy without music. Neither the performance, nor any person concerned in it, deserves discussion. The same thing is true of George Middleton's dramatization of Meredith Nicholson's novel, "The House of a Thousand Candles," which preceded the Armstrong effort at Daly's. The "Thousand Candles" went out just two weeks after the date of their initial exhibition.

Katherine Grey recently reappeared, this time at the Madison Square, in Arthur Schnitzler's simple, direct and intensely human tragedy, "The Reckoning." This drama was preceded each evening by the performance of Herr Schnitzler's delicious satire, "The Literary Sense," which, however, was not nearly so well acted on Twenty-fourth street as some months ago at the German Theatre in Irving Place. "The Literary Sense" treats wittily

of the humorous side of the story-telling instinct, and is real mental caviar.

It is interesting to observe how stupid the cleverest people may become when they commence writing for the stage. There seems to be something about the theatre that awes the intellects of the most capable outsiders, and paralyzes their faculties. A newspaper syndicate, including two or three of the brightest magazine humorists of the day, was responsible for "Funabashi," which Thomas W. Ryley offered at the Casino, and it is safe to say that none of these authors ever turned out a two-stick item containing as few ideas as were in the whole structure of this "new" musical production. Irvin S. Cobb, Carolyn Wells, Wallace Irwin, and Paul West contributed the book and jingles of "Funabashi," and only Mr. West, who doesn't rank with his colleagues as a wit, but who is no novice at lyric writing, turned out anything worth while. "One, Two, Three—Down and Out" and "I've Been Discharged by Them All," both from the Western pen, scored hits. The score of the piece was by Safford Waters, whose only previous work, "Tommy-Rot," lived up to its name when done at Mrs. Osborn's Playhouse.

"Funabashi" was advertised widely as dealing satirically with the travels of Secretary Taft. If it did, Mr. Cobb should try a new deal, for the satire was never visible to the naked eye. The story actually told concerned a basso profundo Secretary of War, who wanted his son to marry "a British heiress"—she acted like a liquid aress—in order to "cement an Anglo-American alliance." Fancy such nonsense! The basso profundo Secretary of War was attended by a soubrette saleswoman from New York, who was in love with a low-comedian wrestler disguised—heaven knows why!—as a geisha. Of course, the tenor son of the Secretary was enamoured of a soprano American girl, and their passion reached its height in a duet for which the dawn came up like lightning outer China 'cross the bay. The whole

fabric was amateurishly put together and inordinately dull.

Nobody in the cast, excepting Maude Fulton, merited much praise. Miss Fulton is always dainty and magnetic, and her saleslady, though not a characterization, was a lively bit of acting. William Rock, a for-God's-sake-dance comedian, was light on his feet as ever, and Alice Fisher worked conscientiously and obviously to get fun out of a stone. Joseph Miron was the Secretary of War, Vera Michelena the soprano heroine, Walter Percival her tenor sweetheart, and Percy Ames a sad "English clubman." He was saddest when he sang. Margaret Rutledge impersonated the heiress. She was animated as a wax figure in a shop window, and manifested about twice as much intelligence.

"Miss Hook of Holland," which I diligently missed last Summer in London, proved to be a very pleasant and entertaining musical comedy as presented by Charles Frohman at the Criterion. There is nothing particularly brilliant or unique in the piece, but its scenes are picturesque, its patter reasonably comic, its tunes catchy, and the whole performance is agreeably free from noise and vulgarity.

Paul Rubens and Austen Hurgon wrote the book of "Miss Hook," the first act of which is laid at a cheese market and the second in a distillery. The location, of course, is Holland. Whatever plot exists concerns the loss of a recipe for making a celebrated cordial, Cream of the Sky, and its ultimate recovery. The best songs in the piece are "No Wonder the Dutchman Flew," "A Little Bit of Cheese," "Bottles," "Little Miss Wooden Shoes," "A Pink Petty from Peter," "I Want to be Your Wife," and a march called "Tra-La-La," which is remarkable by reason of the fact that its inspiring refrain is nothing more nor less than a repetition of the chromatic scale.

In the presenting company, Christie MacDonald is as dainty and charming as ever, and Tom Wise as comically foolish. It must have been this comedian whom a lady novelist had in mind

when she wrote "The Folly of the Wise." Florence Nash lends her quaint lisp to a small part, while Georgia Caine, John McCloskey and Will West are the most important members of the remaining cast. "Miss Hook of Holland" is attractively staged.

During the month, George V. Hobart's "burlesque" of "The Merry Widow" was staged at Weber's Theatre, by a company including Albert Hart, Charles J. Ross, Peter F. Dailey, Joe Weber, Lulu Glaser, Mabel Fenton, and Bessie Clayton. It will at once appear to the judicious that Mr. Hobart can hardly have improved the original libretto—one of the most delightful comic opera books of the decade—and that the original music, which is retained, must be more adequately rendered at the New Amsterdam. Persons who want to hear "The Merry Widow" will do better to hear it at first hand. Those who like unmitigated nonsense, and have a taste for show girls with French dressing, may relish the "burlesque." Peter Dailey, at least, is genuinely amusing, and Franz Lehar's melodies are of the sort that can't be killed, even by a beauty chorus.

To the show at the Hippodrome has been added recently a fifty minute "historical spectacle," entitled "The Battle of Port Arthur." This addition helps the entertainment, not because of any particular merit of its own, but because it permits the compression of the original performance, which was made up of "The Auto Race" and "The Four Seasons." The first mentioned of these two offerings, which was unspeakably dull when it lasted two hours, is most interesting in one.

"The Fall of Port Arthur" is another gunpowder plot, being simply a riot of rapid firing, like "Pioneer Days," set in the Far East instead of in the Far West. The Hippodrome programme says it was written by Owen Davis, but if this piece may be said to have been written at all it was with a trigger. Two gatling guns and a hundred rifles speak the climax of a

production in which there is much horseback riding and some intricate drilling. The scenery set on the enormous stage shows up to wonderful advantage, and the whole performance is now full return for the expenditure of an evening.

At the time of writing, the plays worth seeing in New York were "The Witching Hour," "The Thief," "The

Jesters," "The Warrens of Virginia," "A Grand Army Man," "The Reckoning," "The Literary Sense," "Twenty Days in the Shade," "Her Sister," and "Polly of the Circus." Entertaining musical performances were "The Merry Widow," "Miss Hook of Holland," "The Girl Behind the Counter," "The Top o' th' World," "The Talk of New York," "A Knight for a Day," and the show at the Hippodrome.



THE DREAMERS

By Elsa Barker

WHAT matter though the thorn of pain
 Forever seeks our quivering heart,
 And midnight of our tears is fain?
 Our sorrows are the golden grain
 Of the great reaper—Art.

What matter though we ask for bread
 And the dull world bestows the stone?
 On God's own manna we are fed,
 Honey of dreams and wine love-red
 To the dull world unknown.

Earth's palace doors are open wide
 That narrow souls may enter in;
 But we in Beauty's tent abide,
 Adoring that unravished bride
 Whose veil the ages spin.

We walk the vision-haunted way
 Beyond the rainbow's fragile bridge;
 In Uriel's inner shrine we pray;
 With equal wonder we survey
 The planet and the midge.

For us the Rose of Life reveals
 Her hidden petals without shame,
 For in our questing faith she feels
 The love that melts the seven seals
 Of the Eternal Name.

THE PARTING

By Harold Stuart Eyre

THE girl gently freed herself from his embrace. "Good-bye," she murmured.

"Ah," he exclaimed reproachfully, "how lightly you utter those fatal words! To me they are at this moment the most tragic in all language; they seem to crystallize the relentlessness of destiny, the futility of all human things. Shakespeare could never have loved when he said that parting was such sweet sorrow. Sweet, forsooth! What can be more bitter, more maddening than the enforced separation of two kindred souls who live but in each other's presence and who, apart, have no reason for existence!"

She pressed his hand in silent sympathy.

"Fate is a usurer," he continued, "to make us pay so dearly for our blessings, and of all things sold over her counter, happiness costs the most. For the joy of this brief hour with you she will exact a heavy price in sorrow."

"Be brave, dear," she whispered; "it is not as if we were parting forever."

"Forever!" he echoed. "What is forever? Is intensity of emotion to be measured by the calendar? To the mind etherealized by suffering, a single moment may contain an eternity of anguish. If I could only make you understand what it means to me to leave you! When I realize that I shall soon be far away, beyond the touch of your hand or the music of your voice, when I think of the monotonous routine that lies before me in the world of commerce, of the leaden-footed hours when I shall be apparently absorbed in business problems, but in reality a prey to devastating loneliness, my heart crying out for you and my whole being in revolt against this cruel separation—oh, what have I done to deserve such torture!"

Crushing her convulsively in his arms, he rose abruptly.

"Farewell," he murmured brokenly. "I shall be around tomorrow night, as usual."



URGENT CASE

DR. RUSH (*to bicycle policeman*)—You mustn't arrest me for speeding; I'm in a hurry to see a sick man.

BICYCLE POLICEMAN—Come back with me and see the sick man your auto just ran over.

VICTORIA AMORIS

By Reginald Wright Kauffman

YOUR lips are red June roses
Aflush with dawn and dew,
Your eyes are pools where heaven has found
A mirror for its blue;
The music that your laughter makes
Stills all the listening air;
The Spring is warm within your heart,
The sunlight in your hair.

Your other lovers woo you
With richer gifts than mine;
They bring the homage that must thrill
Your leaping blood like wine;
But, oh, when Summer passes
And Winter days are here,
How many now who prize the gold
Will hold the silver dear?

Then is my harvest gathered,
For you shall always be
Aflush with June and dawn and dew,
Reflecting heaven for me;
Through age and pain and sorrow,
I still shall find you fair:
My Springtime warm within your heart,
My sunlight in your hair.



SET HIM THINKING

RAPIDDE—I thought you told me women don't talk about such things.
MRS. RAPIDDE—Why, my dear, I don't think it was a woman who told me.



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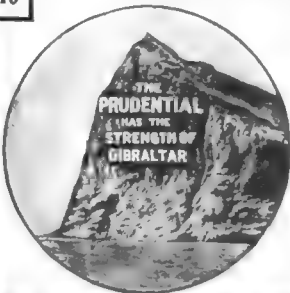
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The Other Side of Motoring

THAT the auto has become a recognized part of the business and social life of today cannot be questioned, but even yet there are thousands of people—yes, some of them automobile owners, too—who regard the auto as a machine primarily designed to annihilate space and to win cups. With a large number of this class, the other, and far more important side of the automobile, is not considered—its peculiar adaptability for pleasant and profitable outings and tours. With the hope of initiating someone into the delights of motoring, I shall endeavor to recount the first trip that I ever took. A friend who was so fortunate as to own a car extended the invitation to me. I have been over the same run several times since, and therefore my descriptions and instructions regarding this run through Westchester County are fuller than would have been possible at the time the run was made.



WHERE THE ROADS ARE GOOD

Starting from Fortieth street and Fifth avenue, we ran north on Fifth avenue to the Circle at Fifty-ninth street, west to Eighth avenue, then north on Eighth avenue to One Hundred and Twelfth street. There we turned to Seventy-fourth street, up which we continued to One Hundred and Fifty-fourth street. At this point my first surprise was given me. I had not realized the tremendous growth of New York City in recent years. The last time I had been so far uptown it was up-country then—Seventh avenue had been more or less an undeveloped dirt road. Now I found it lined with magnificent residences and apartment houses. At One Hundred and Fifty-fourth street we turned to the left, which brought us to McComb's Dam Bridge, crossing which we came to Jerome avenue. We continued north on Jerome avenue to One Hundred and Eighty-ninth street, following which on the right hand brought us to Webster avenue and Fordham Station. This reads tamely enough; only one who has experienced the sensation can appreciate the ex-

(Continued on page 10)



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hilarating effect of flying easily along the smooth asphalt of the city streets, past magnificent mansions, and for miles beside the most beautiful park in the world.

From Fordham Station we followed the bridge over the railroad track into Pelham avenue, followed Pelham avenue through Bronx Park—my first visit to the latter—till passing a sign reading, "Turn here for Woodmansten Inn," we turned through to Pelham Parkway, following the Viaduct over the railroad, passing the Parade Grounds and the Pelham Athletic Field. At this point our speed diminished suddenly and considerably, somewhat, I admit, to my disappointment, and on inquiring regarding it, I was informed that we were nearing a point where we might look for that special bane of the motorist, the police trap, the speed laws being rigidly enforced. Still maintaining our slow speed, we followed the Parkway and crossed over Long Bridge, passing Pelham Bridge Hotel, and further on Hunter Island Inn on the left. Shortly we came to Travers Island, where, my friend being a member of the New York Athletic Club, we stopped for luncheon. To anyone who has enjoyed the hospitality of the New York Athletic Club, the assertion that this break in the journey was most acceptable and satisfying, is superfluous.

After leaving the Club House we followed Pelham Road to Center avenue, turning left on the latter and following it until we came to Main street, New Rochelle, following Main street into the old Boston Post Road, upon which we bowled merrily to Larchmont.

As we entered Larchmont we were confronted with a sign advising us that the speed limit was eight miles an hour, and as later experience had proved, the law is strictly enforced. On this occasion, my friend being entirely familiar with the road, we had reduced speed in time and passed without trouble. A turning to the right brought us to Larchmont avenue, on the left of which are the Larchmont Yacht Club Grounds, where we made a short stop by courtesy of a club member. Leaving the Club House, we turned again to the Boston Post Road, followed along the trolley track, and turned on the right into Mamaroneck avenue, passing under the railroad tracks. Following Mamaroneck avenue to the right, we came to White Plains, where a stop was made at the White Plains Storage and Repair Station for trifling repairs. Leaving, we followed the trolley through White Plains, crossing the railroad tracks, and at Pfander's Hotel turned to the right, continuing straight ahead past the Fair Grounds. This brought us to Elmsford, an exceedingly pretty little town. It is only a short run from this place to Tarrytown, a place teeming with historical associations. It was near Tarrytown that Major André was captured by Paulding, Williams and Van Wart, and from here he was taken across the river and hanged at Tappan. Descendants of the Pauldings reside in Tarrytown to the present time, and the old Paulding mansion can be seen there. This town is further enhanced to the tourist by having been the home of Washington Irving, whose former residence, "Sunnyside," is preserved, and the historical cemetery is the burying place of the Knickerbocker novelist. On this occasion we

(Concluded on page 12)

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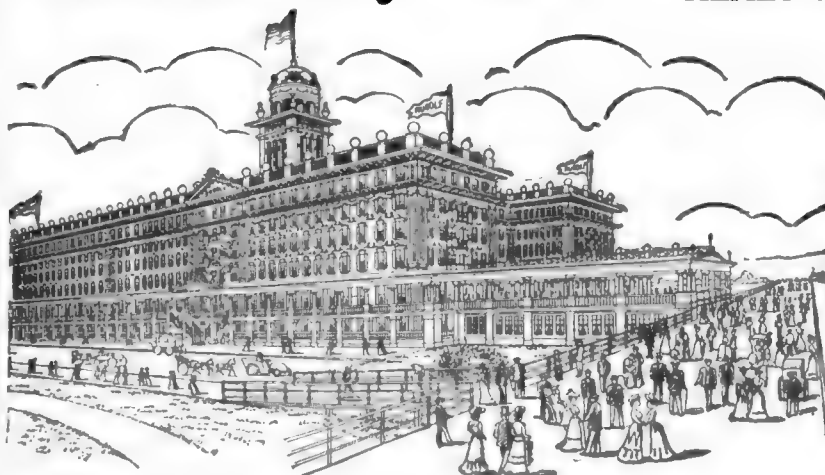
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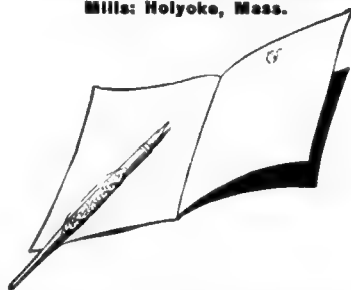
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were unable to continue to Tarrytown, following, instead, a beautiful stretch of winding road through a charmingly wooded valley, which led us into Ardsley, coming in with the Ardsley Station on our left. Continuing through Ashford avenue to Warburton avenue, along which we turned to the left, we followed the main road, always observing the eight-mile-an-hour limit, to and through Dobbs Ferry. Here the road is up a twenty-five per cent. grade into Hastings. Passing through Hastings and following the Viaduct, and Warburton avenue, we came to Yonkers, where we stopped long enough to visit



NEAR THE GARAGE AT THE ARDSLEY CLUB

the present City Hall, called Manor Hall, which was the old Philipse Manor, built years ago by Frederick Philipse, whose grant of land included what is now the entire town of Yonkers.

A turn to the left and then to the right and we had passed through Yonkers to Broadway. By this time the inner man was again demanding attention, and a close lookout was kept for a place where he might be satisfied. We finally discovered a little French restaurant, where a most appetizing dinner was obtained. We decided to stop here for a rest and to complete the balance of the trip by moonlight. The moon rising about nine o'clock, we turned to the left over a trolley track, following a winding road into Van Cortlandt Park, taking due care in crossing the railroad track, where several accidents have occurred, due to careless driving. Here the road is an up-grade right into Moshulu avenue, and from there a steady down-grade past Van Cortlandt Park to Van Cortlandt avenue, leading to the Albany Road. We crossed the Ship Canal Bridge, following the new Viaduct to Kingsbridge Road, to Lafayette Boulevard, where the old stone church loomed up prettily on the right; then through Lafayette Boulevard to Broadway and through to Amsterdam avenue to One Hundred and Forty-fourth street, through Hamilton Place to Broadway and then into Riverside, past Grant's Tomb, and so home.

The entire trip had been made in a short day. It was the beginning of my career as a motorist, and a beginning which I have never since regretted.

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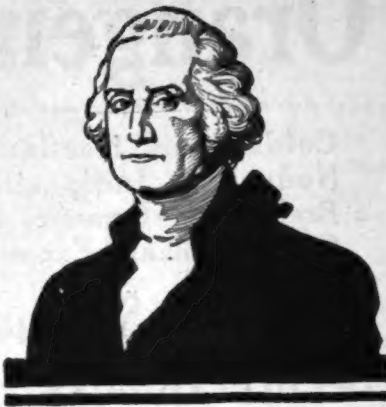
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“In Virginia the richer colonists brewed beer from malt imported from England.”—*Nat'l Mag. Hist.*, vol. 16, page 150.

Ford's Biography [1900], page 108. Quotation from Samuel Stearns *ibid.*.”

History of Virginia by Roger Beverley, Colonial Liquor Laws [Thomas], page 60.

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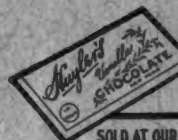
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